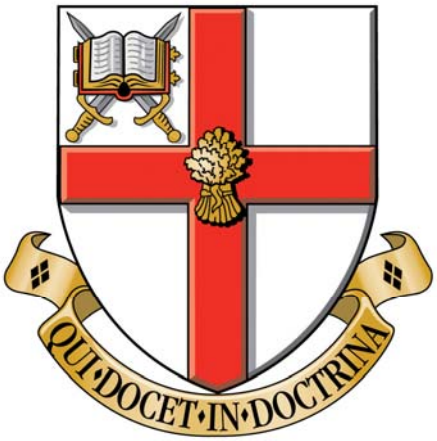

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BEESTON CASTLE, CHESHIRE: AN ANALYSIS OF INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION METHODOLOGY

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Dissertation submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts in the University of Liverpool in part fulfilment of the modular programme in Landscape, Heritage and Society.

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There is more pleasure

in building castles

in the air

than on the ground.

(Edward Gibbon, taken from J. Burke, *Life in the Castle in Medieval England* (Totowa, New Jersey, 1978), p.116).

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CONTENTS

Page Number

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

The aim of interpretation is to display a thing of significance to the public by communicating its values. It is argued here that, while acknowledging its significance, the heritage management of a monument should not isolate it, either from its continuity, or from its wider context. Although heritage interpretation and presentation methodologies are discussed, the definition of 'heritage' itself is not, this being considered a subject and debate in its own right.

The dissertation effectively consists of two parts: Chapters 1 and 2 discuss issues and considerations regarding interpretation and presentation for both monuments and their exhibitions, and attempt to place English Heritage's role within this process.

The second part, Chapters 3 to 5, is a case study based on Beeston Castle, Cheshire. Its significance historically, architecturally and archaeologically, is discussed before placing it in a wider context and concludes with an analysis of English Heritage's interpretation and presentation methodology at the site, drawing on comparisons with other monuments and their exhibitions.

The dissertation finds that Beeston Castle embodies a power that has metamorphosed over centuries, now lying within the visitor and English Heritage. A sustainable future for Beeston Castle is dependent on English Heritage's ability to serve different people, managing the conflicts and balancing the needs of each group with the need to preserve the site for future generations. Such balancing results in the failure, in the main, to convey the continuity of this site and isolates it from its wider context, this opinion itself being open to interpretation.

INTRODUCTION

Interpretation and presentation methodology falls under the broad umbrella of heritage management. The definition of 'heritage' is the subject of much debate. However, it is generally accepted that a monument such as a ruined castle, is part of our heritage. When the monument is managed by a body such as English Heritage, its visitor becomes involved, perhaps unconsciously, with its heritage management.

The first part of the dissertation concentrates on the concept of interpretation, which aims to construe the significance or intention of the monument by communicating its values. The presentation to the visitor of the monument's history and what has been interpreted as its significance, results from the interpretation process. It is this delivery that has the potential for immediate impact on today's visitor as he enters the site and any accompanying exhibition. Current issues and considerations regarding interpretation and presentation for both the monument and any accompanying exhibition are discussed, and some of the key influences are addressed. Although an essential aspect of interpretation is the publication of material in support of the exhibition, this is normally an optional purchase for the visitor and is not considered as part of the exhibition for the purpose of this dissertation. How the process of interpreting and presenting ruins has evolved, as well as English Heritage's role within that process, is also examined.

Beeston Castle, Cheshire, has a history stretching back almost eight hundred years, with its foundations overlying a Bronze Age hillfort dating from around four thousand years ago. The incredible power of Beeston Castle's founder, Ranulph de Blundeville, is examined in the second part of the dissertation, as well as the site's perceived significance and values. In addition, it is put forward that the castle today is not a relic of that power, but embodies a continuous yet metamorphosed power currently lying within English Heritage which manages the site, as well as the visitor's own interpretation.

Having the power to control the present equally gives English Heritage the power to control both the past and the future. It is this body which interprets and presents, through its site and exhibition, the castle's long history of power on society and the landscape. It is argued that to be in such a position, the monument, despite being geographically isolated on its sheer, rocky crags overlooking the Cheshire Plain, should not be treated as though isolated from its historical continuity. Equally, a representation of totality should be aimed for. The monument, therefore, should not be divorced from the landscape, but should be placed in a wider context, thereby leaving the thread of power as intact as possible, and thus increasing the relevance and power of the site to today's visitor.

In the light of these views, the dissertation concludes with an analysis of English Heritage's interpretation and presentation methodology at Beeston Castle, and thus brings us back full circle to Chapter 1, where it is recognised that the visitor becomes the final arbiter, measuring history against history, interpretation against interpretation.

CHAPTER 1

Heritage Interpretation and Presentation

Heritage interpretation involves the sequential process of conservation, interpretation and presentation of a historical site, monument or object. There is the danger of treating the words interpretation and presentation as interchangeable, when interpretation ought to be a prelude to both conservation and presentation. It is suggested that presentation involves at least three stages: *interpretation*, which decides what the available information signifies, *selection*, which chooses what aspects of significance are to be presented, and *presentation*, which applies the appropriate techniques to communicate what has been selected. [1]

Selection and presentation of the past, however, has been described as 'rose-tinted', responding to 'unfillable needs of dreams of power, comfort' and where,

> prestige appears to be a matter of consumption rather than a cultural issue for making people aware of their identity. History is interpreted to stimulate nostalgia, idealize the past, and leads to a selective understanding of the past that has more to do with fantasy and fairy tales than veracity. [2]

Heritage interpretation is, therefore, a product as well as a process which deals with identity [3], both product and process being open to criticism. Indeed, it is argued that the past is 'no longer a finite entity but a resource, sometimes the last resource. As such it is shaped and moulded to the needs of the present, and in the process filtered, polished and drained of meaning'. [4] So, what, then, is interpretation, and why is it so emotive?

Interpretation and Selection

Interpretation is the act or process of explaining or clarifying, translating, or presenting a personal understanding about a subject or object. [5] Interpretation, however, 'is as much about changing behaviour as heightening awareness and

understanding, and changing attitudes. Tilden (1957) and Aldridge (1972) have both forcefully argued that one end product of the interpretative process is the encouragement and development of a conservation ethic'. [6] Indeed, Freeman Tilden, in his acclaimed 1957 publication, *Interpreting Our Heritage,* set out six principles for interpretation, one of which states that the 'chief aim of interpretation is not instruction, but provocation'. [7] Uzzell argues that if we are to encourage such 'revelation based on information' [8], we should be 'giving interpretation away. By this I mean that interpreters should be giving away the tools and skills of interpretation to enable Everyman to become his or her own interpreter'. [9]

There is a danger that the more sophisticated the interpretative techniques, the more passive and unquestioning the audience becomes. So as to 'unleash' visitors' imagination, it is not sufficient simply to interpret a site, but enable Everyman to 'generalize from what they have learnt at one site to another site, so that they can interpret those other sites themselves'. [10] After all, 'History is continually being re-presented, re-worked and re-interpreted', [11] both by the interpreter and visitor, alike. No interpretation of the past is, therefore, the same; it is subjective, and just as importantly, 'we can view the past, and achieve our understanding of the past, only through the eyes of the present'. [12] Thus, interpretation is 'an act of appropriation of the past which renders the past contemporary and yet confronts the difference, the otherness'. [13]

It is the grey area of the 'otherness' that incites the emotiveness. Interpreters operate as agents of society and produce histories to service that society. The 'history of history is largely about the historian and the uncertainty associated with the process of making "sense" of the evidence of the past'. [14] Where heritage is perceived as a distortion of this history, in terms of accuracy and critical interpretation, it may also 'purvey a past that is pastiched and collaged'. According to Hewison, this '"pick 'n' mix" approach weakens our knowledge and understanding of history'. [15] Hannabuss, however, asks how interpretation can be 'really real' in an age where everyone is used to,

consuming heritage, accessing culture and education as a universal democratic resource, and living in a global world where media and cyberspace are providing everything for everyone, and consequently giving everybody everyone else's experiences, and turning most events and experiences into spectacles. [16]

Despite this predicament, Hannabuss believes that in personal and collective forms, the 'search continues as a spiritual pilgrimage until visitors find what is 'real' for them. We have arguably moved from postmodernism to neo-realism'. [17]

Figure 1. These two images, taken from English Heritage's Spring 2000 *Heritage Learning* magazine, show how two different artists have interpreted the same building. They reinforce how one interpretation cannot be relied upon.

To Interpret or Not To Interpret?

If interpretation, then, is subjective, emotive and about the identity of the interpreter, and we eventually find what is 'real' for ourselves, why interpret the past at all? Uzzell, (above), argues that the tools should be provided for the visitor to interpret for himself. However, this approach clearly involves some interpretation, no matter how 'neo-realistic' the approach. Baker suggests that with interpretation, there are 'three different strands of attitude, often temperamental inclinations': [18] These are to,

1. let the past 'speak for itself',
2. be explicit about the theoretical and methodological assumptions behind any work, or
3. relate academic or research-based perceptions with social issues. [19]

Interpretative theory suggests that for the 'non-captive audience', he continues, it is an emotional response to the physical experience of a place that is the principal means of engaging the mind and interest of the viewer [20], thus suggesting an advocacy of the first attitude.

Indeed, letting the past speak for itself, was an idealized concept during the nineteenth century Gothic Revival period, when the Romantic Movement prevailed. This concept used nature to fill a void left by the decline of religion and identified the sublime with the beauty of classical perfection, as expressed by James in 1905:

> I have rarely had, for a couple of hours, the sensation of dropping back personally into the past so straight as while I lay on the grass beside the well in the little sunny court of this small castle and lazily appreciated the still definite details of mediaeval life. [21]

Pierre Bourdieu, in the introduction to his book, *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste* (1984), warns against this 'raw' approach for current site interpretation, as follows:

> A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded. (...) A beholder who lacks the specific code feels lost in a chaos of sounds and rhythms, colours and lines, without rhyme or reason. (...) Thus, the encounter with a work of art is not love at first sight as is generally supposed. [22]

It may be argued that a minimalist interpretative approach could be misleading to the visitor, as well as incur an uneasy releasing of the interpreter of his possessive power to inform. A ruin can provide an evocative and emotive link to the past, but it can bewildering, too, with its lack of floors, roofs and plaster, surrounded by a freshly mown lawn. Perhaps the answer is to aim for a balance, where the visitors' imagination is unlocked by unobtrusive, yet provocative, interpretation. As Warhurst of Norton Priory, a medieval site with exhibition and education centre in Cheshire, states,

> I am not advocating letting a site speak for itself: this is something I learnt the hard way. Norton Priory does speak for itself but usually in a language completely unintelligible to the majority of visitors. In order to make the site relevant and understandable to visitors, we have to be sure we are using the language used by them. (...) Its special magic is being a peaceful haven within an urban landscape, allowing people time and space to experience for themselves a very specific place that has moved from a closed community through a place of privilege and is now open to all. [23]

As Chitty aptly summarises,

> Information will always be needed; but we can remind ourselves that ancient places are animated by other symbolic and illusory meanings, too, which can lead on to a value-rich and more meaningful apprehension of human history and its future. [24]

Continuity and Totality

We have encountered the opinion that, 'Our creative representations of the past are shaped not by what we know to be true of the past, but what we believe to be true of the present'. [25] Should we accept this point of view, however, is it then possible to reflect continuity and provide a complete picture of the past, from the past to the present? Arguably, this would involve yet more interpretation, and,

therefore, more of the interpreter's identity, to mould the past, the 'otherness', in order to plug the inevitable gaps.

Ironically, however, by 'freeze-framing' our heritage and thus ignoring the continuity, equally ignores,

> the psychological reality that neither those who provide interpretations of the past nor those who receive these interpretations can avoid loading them with their own (twenty-first)-century perspectives. [26]

To distance ourselves in time from the original event, is likely to influence our perceptions, understandings and appreciations. It will also 'affect our feelings and affective response. The edge gets blunted'. [27] This must, in turn, adversely affect the desired conservation ethic.

Because ruins provide more answers and beg more questions, [28] one of the greatest difficulties, according to Rumble, English Heritage's Chief Executive, is to,

> know where the story starts and where it finishes. Clearly selectivity is important and in most cases my money would be on telling the story in relation to the individual monument rather than starting the story too far back with too many sub-plots. I believe that the professional jargon is that one should aim for 'minimum conceptual orientation of the visitor'. [29]

The interpreter's remit is clearly more difficult the further he departs from site interpretation to off-site and global interpretation. This is because interpretation 'is about place and the concept of place, about putting people and things into their environmental context, restoring provenance to artefacts that have lost their roots so that their significance can once more be seen'. [30]

There is no doubt that the settlements and landscapes of which a monument, a historic survival, is a part, are likely to be 'large, complex, multi-period and more difficult to identify coherently amidst constructions and land-uses of today.' [31]

However, is it the interpreter's right to ignore the challenge of interpreting the continuity and totality of a monument and its significance in its landscape, and thus isolate it from its context?

Waterson of the National Trust boldly asserts that one of the first qualifications for an interpretative planner is to 'know when to leave well alone, when *not* to interpret'. [32] Conversely, we can be accused, of 'fram(ing) much of our research and presentation in national terms, without widening the issues to the world society'. [33] A view expressed by Wallace in 1987, is that the interpretation of our past, is, in fact, deficient in three respects:

(1) We need to strive for a better connection of past, present and future to overcome the tendency of seeing the past as something that is finished with, and which now has simply nostalgic, academic or entertainment value.

(2) We need to stress that any moments considered are moments in larger processes – processes which are still in operation.

(3) Interpretation and presentation should take not only a larger temporal perspective, but also a wider spatial and global perspective.

The consequence of these deficiencies as Wallace puts it, is that 'an opportunity is being lost to inform visitors about great historical processes which have drastically affected their lives, and thus to empower them, by enhancing their capacity to understanding, to perhaps change, their world'. [34]

Fowler suggests that the concept of continuity and totality can survive through the visitors' own interpretation: 'Those who talk of the past as dead fail to recognize its organic nature and to appreciate that, despite its physical existence as monuments (...) essentially it lives in the mind'. [35]

While it is important for the interpreter to appreciate this concept, however, in order for the visitor to gain an understanding of the past in his mind so that it may ultimately live there, some interpretation is considered necessary. For a number of,

mainly practical reasons, any interpretation has to be selective and incomplete. Rumble puts the crucial argument forward, that, 'It matters that they are incomplete but I think the accurate presentation from a single point of view can be justified provided it leads on to a consideration of the totality.' [36]

Presentation and The Visitor

Presentation is the message carrier for interpretation. It can be achieved only after conservation and interpretation have been carried out. It includes financial implications for both the presenter and the paying visitor: Is it 'value for money'? Financial implications aside, how does the presenter get a message beyond the tidiness of a site, and through the dereliction, to the visitor?

The presentation of a monument can be made both by using the monument as the primary source, and the site museum, where this exists. A museum is an interpretative exhibition of objects having an origin at some distance from the building in which they are housed. The exhibition makes use of diverse presentational media, which can include diagrams; photocopies of documents; plans; photographs including aerial views; life-size models in historically recreated interiors; reconstructed buildings; videos and tape tours; interactive displays and computerized screens; objects excavated from the site on display, and Living History programmes which feature costumed re-enactors using replica artefacts. On the other hand, the monument is, of course, *in situ.* The monument site, in addition to any media employed, above, may equally make use of artists' impressions found in guidebooks and interpretation panels. The museum is regarded as a place for study, self-instruction and education. The monument is a reminder of events and people.

As with selection and interpretation, Baker tells us, 'the path from data to presentation is rarely smooth: many of the potholes represent original deficits or imbalances whose creative plugging is essential for a coherent result'. [37] Hannabuss claims that this creative process of heritage interpretation and

presentation, has always 'seemed an uneasy mixture between scholarship and marketing hype, fact and nostalgia, educating and entertaining, and monologue and dialogue.' [38] For some, the original purpose of a museum or exhibition centre affiliated to a historical site, to 'preserve and interpret in a scholarly manner a significant number of objects, has been almost entirely displaced by the desire to give the visitor some kind of more or less pleasurable "experience"'. [39]

However, can presenters ignore that more and more people are slicing at the heritage attractions cake, [40] thus ignoring the marketing pull, and thereby placing that very heritage in jeopardy? Fowler ventures so far as to ask whether historical significance should be 'a significant part of the heritage business when its immediate priorities are more bums on seats and tourists through the turnstiles, to satisfy management requirements, committee directives or, quite simply, to survive?' [41]

Presentation is, therefore, an art, which is responsive to the 'interests, needs and desires of different constituencies (those people, groups or communities who have or express such interests in the material past)'. [42] These interests, needs and desires are considered the public's rights and Uzzell believes that interpretation and presentation must, therefore, 'start where the visitor is, not where interpreters think the visitor is or should be'. [43] Merriman laments that the public is 'looking back to a more glorious past, but this past, as portrayed in displays led by marketing policies, is a romanticised fiction'. [44] Yet, one of Tilden's six interpretation principles states that, in fact, 'any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.' [45]

Clearly, a balance is necessary between supply and demand and this 'can only be achieved through more focused research on the voice of the visitor, and a collaborative programme of visitor surveys should be a top priority'. [46] Achieving this balance, however, may create a conflict of interest between '"giving the public what they want" (the consumer is always right in the ideology of the market place) and

"instructing the populace in what's good for them" (patronizing Victorian-style philanthropism)'. [47] Implications of the demand itself, include uneven previous knowledge about the subject matter, attitudes towards the experience, and particularly the general image of the institution, which all have an important effect on whether or not visiting occurs. [48] This balancing of supply and demand creates, as Gurian suggests, a resultant product, the exhibition, which 'must have embedded within it either agreed-upon assumptions about the audience or a coherent view of the audience as articulated by a single prevailing power source'. [49]

Multifaceted Power Source

What are the influences and powers on today's presentations? To explain the move away from the professional's point of view, as epitomized in the 1980's, to the more recent visitor's point of view, concerns four factors:

1) Growing visitors studies literature.
2) The rapid and popular expansion of theme parks and similar attractions, and a view of museums as part of the leisure industry led to the adoption of interpretative strategies derived from that industry. We began to see simulation capsules, costumed interpreters and more interactives.
3) Political factors. Museum educators had to adapt to the requirements of the National Curriculum (introduced in 1989), in planning for school groups, whilst government and municipal funding bodies, lottery assessors and sponsors began to articulate demands for a more inclusive approach, reaching out to ethnic minorities, the disabled and those who did not traditionally visit museums. Audience segmentation, although not alienation, was thereby introduced, and
4) The developing rhetoric of lifelong learning became influential. [50]

These predominantly external factors are in addition to internal, organisational ones affecting presentation. For indeed, Weil states that interpreters and presenters 'transmit messages too – as a medium we are also a message – and it seems to

me vital that we understand better just what those messages are'. [51] Such transmissions, such 'commodifications of the past', could well 'legitimate contemporary social relations in favour of the dominant groups'. [52]

Having acknowledged the power of competition and market forces, the political factor introducing the National Curriculum has meant that exhibitions that happen to have collections and presentations on topics that fall outside the main themes of the required topics must struggle to justify the educational value of their possessions. [53] Despite Aldridge asserting that it is not possible to interpret to children, [54] Tilden advocates that 'interpretation for children should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should develop its own approach.' [55]

While museums acknowledge that children retain what their parents tell them far longer than information they get from any other source, [56] Tilden's suggested alternative presentational approach should capitalize on the assumption that 'children learn by doing'. [57] Rather than simply telling them about environmental problems, for example, we should involve them in a simulation and give them a chance to be a decision-maker. Context, in summary, is argued to be the essence of what learning is all about. [58] Caulton informs us that the presenter's response has been, however, to concentrate on promotion to schools, often producing curriculum materials in an attempt to raise the educational profile, rather than changing the core product by introducing hands-on learning. [59]

But should education dominate the display? The commonly held view that the main purpose of museums is educational rather then recreational, is currently being challenged. [60] This leads on to the power of interaction, both educationally and recreationally, and the subsequent effect on presentation.

There is a lot to be said for the Chinese Proverb,

> Tell me and I will forget
>
> Show me and I may remember

> Involve me and I will understand. [61]

Indeed, hands-on presentations arguably provide the 'tools and toys of yesterday the dynamics of interactions that books and television cannot attain'. [62] Hein, however, believes that,

> Physical involvement is a necessary condition for learning for children, and highly desirable for adults in many situations, but it is not sufficient. All hands-on activities must also pass the test of being minds-on – they must provide something to think about as well as something to touch. [63]

Gurian, who states that, 'tactile comprehension does not necessarily translate into verbal understanding', reinforces this. [64]

Are audio guides 'minds-on'? Currently widely accredited in the heritage industry as a device to inform and enlighten, Chitty states that, 'what begins as a well-intentioned aid to a better appreciation of history can end in a bland and artificially constructed "heritage" that has tenuous links with the reality of experiencing the place itself'. [65]

Despite the controversy, Caulton believes that the museum or exhibition of the future is likely to incorporate a whole range of interpretative devices, including artefacts, hands-on exhibits, live interpreters and new technologies, to help visitors make sense of their surroundings. [66] Crucially, he points out, however, that,

> Whilst hands-on exhibits may well have replaced some glass showcase displays, and whilst constructivist exhibitions may be replacing didactic displays, the basic objective of the museum to present and interpret the world around us is essentially the same. The underpinning message, not the medium by which is transmitted, is of paramount importance. [67]

Summary

Interpretation involves negotiation between values and interpreters' knowledge of the past and those brought in by visitors. It is also influenced by various external powers. The result is a form of 'negotiated reality'. [68] Presentation strategies are equally a 'two-way process with some risk of ships passing each other in the night'. [69] This process ranges between anecdote and analysis, and from spectacle to interactive experience, all of which aim to deliver the negotiated interpretative message. A historical site and its significance ought to be interpreted and subsequently presented with an emphasis on, and consideration for, its individuality, yet it 'should be viewed dynamically, as the present state of a continuing process of landscape evolution rather than as an isolated and static phenomenon'. [70]

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CHAPTER 2

English Heritage: Interpretation and Presentation Strategies

The guardian of Beeston Castle is English Heritage. The extent of its power, and its associated responsibility, held by its educators, interpreters and presenters in its transmission of the past, is profound. On examining the roots to the fruits of this power, we witness a force driven by a continuity of guises.

The roots lay in the first legislation, in 1882, when the Government placed the care of ancient remains on the Office of Works, its descendants being the Department of the Environment and currently, English Heritage. [1] Under such an arrangement, a ruin normally passes into State care under deed of guardianship, the owner retaining the freehold but the cost of maintenance and management becoming the responsibility of the State. [2]

The early legislators thought primarily in terms of preservation, intending that the monument should thereafter sufficiently remind the onlooker of the events that it recorded without further prompting. [3] The concept of letting the monuments 'speak for themselves', which was typical of the way in which many ruined sites in State guardianship were presented in the earlier part of the last century, 'only ever worked well for a small, well-educated minority of people who understood what they were seeing, or for those who were content simply to take pleasure in ruins'. [4]

At many sites in public guardianship until around 1970, information was provided in two ways. Cast metal plaques fixed to walls, or set in the turf, acted as 'labels' bearing such legends as 'chapel', or more obscurely, 'frater', and 'reredorter'. Blue-covered Official Guides published by HMSO were usually available, but the extent to which they helped visitors was questionable. Experts wrote them, but they were authoritative, they were difficult for the visitor to use and made few concessions in respect of language and terminology. [5] Archaeology, to which public guardianship

was biased, was considered 'an academic and aloof discipline, concerned about its scholarly integrity and fearful of being taken over by mere practitioners'. [6]

Figure 2. Cast metal plaque fixed to wall at Dunstanburgh Castle, Northumbria.

Since about 1970, innovative means of conveying information for visitors have been developed. Interpretation, as practised today, is believed to have originated from Scandinavia in the late 19th Century, with Anders Sandvig's creation of the world's first open air museum at Lillehammer in 1887. Following Rockefeller Jnr.'s later Colonial Williamsburg in America, Freeman Tilden became the first writer to embrace the interpretative philosophy of blending the ethnological with the ecological in *Interpreting Heritage* (1957). His book had a strong influence on work by the first English National Parks and the interpretative exhibition, derived from the national parks in the USA, has since been introduced on a number of ruins in this country.[7]

In the 1980's, the 'historic' environment emphasised human interaction with the 'natural' world [8], and in the same decade, English Heritage emerged. English Heritage is the Government's statutory adviser on the historic environment.

Officially known as the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England, it is an Executive Non-department Public Body sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, whose powers and responsibilities are set out in the National Heritage Act (1983). It reports to Parliament through the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. English Heritage is funded in part by the Government and in part from revenue earned from our historic properties and other services. [9]

Its general duties under the 1983 Act are to,

1. secure the preservation of ancient monuments and historic buildings situated in England;
2. promote the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of conservation areas situated in England;
3. promote the public's enjoyment of, and enhance their knowledge of, ancient monuments and historic buildings situated in England and their preservation. [10]

Amongst English Heritage functions, is that of providing educational facilities and services, instruction and information to the public in relation to ancient monuments, historic buildings and conservation areas in England. [11] In the 1990's, 'sustainability' was a concept of custodianship considered suitable for the leap to the next millennium, and exploration by English Heritage of ideas about sustainable development in 1997 for archaeological sites include:

> **Cultural values**: the historic environment helps to define a sense of place and provides a context for everyday life. Its appreciation and conservation foster distinctiveness at local, regional and national level. It reflects the roots of our society and records its evolution.
>
> **Educational and academic values**: the historic environment is a major source of information about our ancestors, the evolution of their society and the characteristics of past environments. It provides a means for new generations to understand the past and their own culture. We can also use

archaeology to learn about the long-term impact (and sustainability or otherwise) of past human activity and development, and to use this knowledge when planning our future.

Recreational values: Increasingly, the past and its remains in the present are a vital part of people's everyday life and experiences.

Aesthetic, economic and resource values were other factors included. [12]

In 1999, English Heritage completed a new network of regional offices, working at the heart of each of the government's nine regions. Its frontline conservation work and the management of its historic properties is now carried out in integrated teams, 'giving a clearer sense of purpose, better services and above all a more powerful national and regional champion for the historic environment'. [13]

In 2000, English Heritage commenced an open consultation process involving around 250 organisations, to reassess entirely its policies on the historical environment of England, in the hope of giving it 'a relevancy to modern life'. The review was called by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport as the first step to address what a select committee identified as a gap in the government's strategy for conservation and heritage. The public was consulted through a new website. The emphasis is on changing people's understanding of the historic environment to include everything around them and to encourage understanding that the environment relates to the past as well as the future. The deadline for the report was September 2000. [14]

The roots of English Heritage were the 'closed shop' to our past, whereas in the new millennium, English Heritage believes that the past belongs to everybody. It exists to ensure that people, 'wherever they live and whatever their background, enjoy, understand and appreciate England's rich and diverse history'. [15]

Education

English Heritage is recognised as the market leader in education. In the 1990's, heritage organisations mainly targeted school groups. Other groups are now being considered, with English Heritage looking at further and higher education. Indeed, over the financial year 2000/2001, it intends to extend their production of educational materials beyond the National Curriculum by publishing a total of eleven new resources of which three will be directed towards lifelong learning. [16] In addition, there are eleven professional Education Officers based around the country, who offer help and advice. [17]

While most sites provide site-specific *Information for Teachers* leaflets, work sheets for children or students, are not provided. The schoolteacher interprets the site for himself, and tailors his understanding to the students' requirements and abilities. English Heritage is mindful of its duty to provide educational facilities and to this end, a variety of non-site-specific educational materials has been produced.

The Education Officer is also a vital component of English Heritage's regional interpretation team setting up a new exhibition. The National Curriculum is, however, a restraint and without the balance provided by the team, there is a danger of changing the relationship between mainstream education and the exhibition, 'subsuming them into the practices of schools, rather than maintaining them as "another kind of learning experience"'. [18]

Continuity and Totality

Sir Charles Peers, Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments from 1910 to 1933, believed that, 'Buildings which are in use are still adding to their history; they are alive. Buildings which are in ruin are dead; their history is ended (...)'. [19] The approach adopted by Peers presented the monument, and the monument alone, to the public. The aim was to present clear building plans, the justification being that,

> creative it is not but rather re-creative (...) An understanding of what has been is necessary, but imagination must be kept in bounds and not translated into material; repair not restoration is the essence of the matter. [20]

With the best intentions, therefore, Peers froze time and place. Emerick retorts with, 'No monument can be frozen, no monument has a historical full stop in the manner suggested by Peers'. [21] Indeed, we have rediscovered the landscape. We realise that we can 'only understand abbeys, priories, castles, by looking at the evidence from their adjacent and distant economic hinterlands'. [22] Baker states that,

> in one sense, preservation as "monumentalisation" inevitably detaches the survival from its social and economic context, which then continues to evolve; in another sense, however, the monument has a new role in that context as a relic that helps define the present, and how it views the past. [23]

In its new role, a monument of the past may be a source of pleasure, and exhibitions and ancient monuments are being aimed at a wider consumer group, not just to the educated and knowledgeable, and there is a greater emphasis on making the past interesting, attractive, accessible and educational. [24] English Heritage claims to run what may be the country's largest programme of special events and open-air music. [25]

English Heritage's approach, however, is not without criticism:

> It is the presentation of false history as history that has to be criticized and indeed condemned. English Heritage, and other organisations, invite this criticism for (...) its presentations, although 'light hearted pageantry', have a 'serious purpose'. [26]

While we recognise that individuals, interest groups and societies all have different perspectives on the past and that there are 'multiple and competing pasts made in accordance with ethnic, cultural and gender political orientations' [27], we must ask

Figure 3. Nineteenth century reconstruction of infirmary cloister arcade, Rievaulx Abbey.

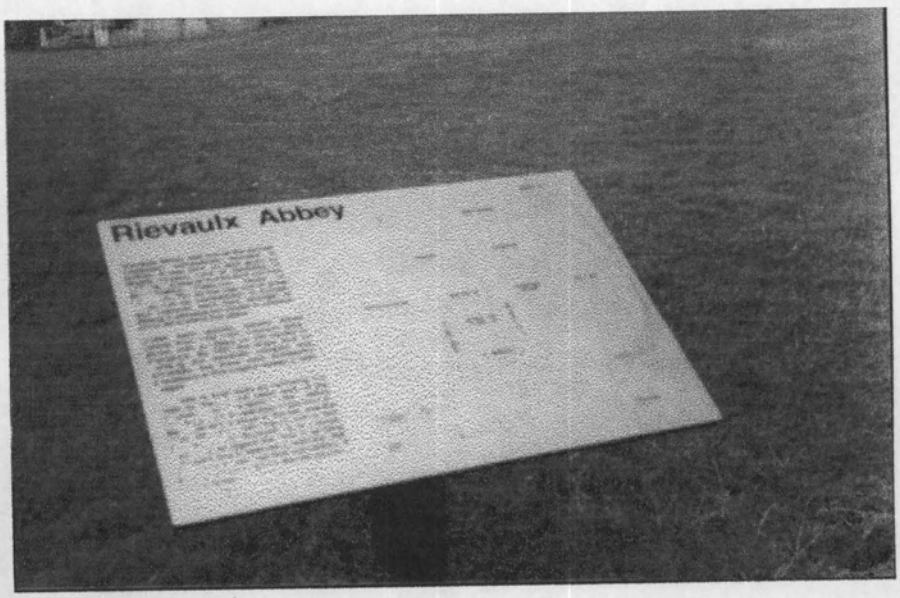

Figure 4. One of the several pre-1970 interpretative panels at Rievaulx Abbey, showing building plans.

ourselves whether English Heritage is 'dumming down' [28] its presentations, to the exclusion, somewhat ironically, of today's academics. Heritage management is a balancing act inevitably resulting in compromise, with the demands of historical accuracy and authenticity being just one factor, and appealing to the masses to get 'bums on seats' being another. [29]

Strategies in Practice

While the National Trust has a tendency towards homogenisation in the way in which its heritage is presented, English Heritage identifies the individual qualities of its sites, while retaining its corporate identity. For example, during 1999, 'in a pioneering approach to the conservation of a historic property, Wigmore Castle was restored as found, a romantic ruin (...)'. [30] Wigmore Castle, Shropshire, is one of

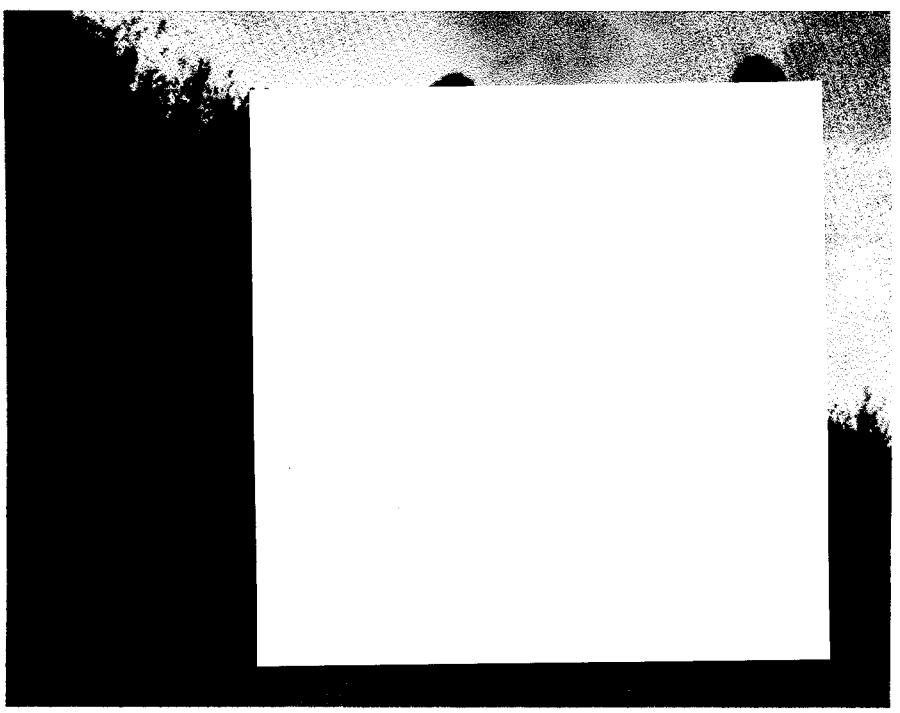

Figure 5. Wigmore Castle, Shropshire. Taken from English Heritage's Magazine for Members, December 1999.

the few major castles in Britain that has not been conserved since it was abandoned in the sixteenth century. It remains a substantial ruin within an area of historic

woodland pasture. Natural decay over four centuries has left a spectacular and romantic ruin. [31]

Coppack recognises, however, that the 'castle is, of course, only one element of a much larger whole, and must be treated as such'. [32] To the east, the village of Wigmore is a planned town with an important pre-Conquest church, whilst to the north are substantial remains of Wigmore Abbey. The castle is on the frontier with Wales and served as a base for the English colonisation of that country. Coppack argues that, 'Its conservation and display must be seen in that wider context and it must be separated from that context by modern intervention'. [33]

This 'neo-realistic' approach is mirrored to some extent at Stokesay Castle, Shropshire, a thirteenth century fortified manor house. Here, English Heritage's aim has been to give visitors safe access to a site that still has a real sense of discovery, being little changed from its natural state. Chitty convincingly argues that the,

> trend in presentation generally continues to be towards adding layers of extraneous experience and information (...) there is still the experience of the place itself which is all the richer, some would say, for being unencumbered by formal historical knowledge. [34]

With Brodsworth Hall, Yorkshire, English Heritage's desire was to convey continuity by retaining something of the unique quality of the place, which had evolved over 120 years, rather than restore it to its Victorian splendour. 'What we see now', Allfrey states, 'is not something preserved from change, or a complete picture from any period, but the outcome of a continuing process, which includes the programme of works to open the site to the public'. [35]

In 1993, English Heritage took the lead in the development of a Management Plan for Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site, [36] with a view that Hadrian's Wall 'cannot be seen as a single, isolated monument, and where archaeology, ecology and landscape blend together to form an harmonious whole'. [37] This broader perspective

Figure 6. Stokesay Castle, Shropshire.

produces a partnership, which is 'more and more central to success (...) not only by pooling funding but also by gaining synergy'. [38] The same principle is encountered, when English Heritage forges partnerships with outside bodies, where to conserve is seen as a partnership. An example is Bolingbroke Castle, where the Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire manages the site under the guardianship of English Heritage. Similarly, English Heritage archaeologists and curators are now more active in sharing and comparing experiences and interpretations with other heritage organisations. [39]

This wider approach extends to urban and rural settlements and natural and semi-natural habitats, exemplifying that interest has expanded to encompass a widening range of elements in the historic environment. [40] Wigmore Castle is celebrated for its natural grass capping, wild plants and rare ferns, while Augustine's Abbey, Kent and Bolingbroke Castle, Lincolnshire, have both been notified as Country Wildlife Sites on account of their wall flora. [41]

Two new exhibitions opened during the summer of 2000, both of which were produced by the same interpretation team as that which produced Beeston Castle's, the subject of our case study, in 1997. The first to open in May, was Rievaulx Abbey's, in Yorkshire, entitled, 'The Work of God and Man'. [42] English Heritage is said to have,

> brought a little known part of Yorkshire's past vividly back to life with the opening of an important, new museum dedicated to the men who were part of the first stirrings of the Industrial Revolution 850 years ago and the crescendo of a radical religious credo. [43]

Nearly one hundred artefacts have been put on display, many unseen by the public before, to tell the story of the region's first 'multi-national' business and the fountainhead of Cistercian faith in northern Britain. However, the aesthetically pleasing display tells only one part of the story, that being when the Abbey was thriving. The broader perspective must be that the visitor may generalize what he has learnt from one Cistercian site to another.

At Rievaulx, we are asked to touch and smell things, and we are challenged with thought-provoking questions, as well as medieval technology and the mathematics of weight and strength. Such objectives, forming part of the National Curriculum, are tackled in an innovative manner. As to whether the hands-on approach is also minds-on for all visitors, is yet to be assessed.

Richmond Castle's new exhibition, entitled 'Richmond Castle, Commerce and Conscience' [44], opened in July 2000. It comprises three sections: Laying the Foundations; The Middle Classes and the Middle Ages, 1200 -1800 and Conflict and Conscience – after 1800. Various media are used to suit all ages and previous knowledge, including computerized touch-screens. As at Rievaulx, there are a large number of artefacts on display. While thematic displays feed National Curriculum agendas as well as those of the general visitor, the architectural historian would, no doubt, be disappointed. However, it may be argued that any

knowledge gained about Richmond Castle from the stimulating display, could be applied to other sites.

The chronological totality of the site is clearly paramount at Richmond. Power is the thread running through the continuity of the castle's history. We read on one of the pillars in the exhibition area:

> A symbol of power ...
>
> The castle was a massive addition to the landscape.
>
> It stamped the earl's authority on the land and the people. [45]

On another pillar, we read of the castle's continuity and its power throughout time:

> Richmond Castle has stood for almost 1000 years from the Battle of Hastings to the Battle of Britain. It has been a powerful landmark and symbolic of military conquest ... of the power of nobility ... of romantic beauty, ... of the freedom of the individual, and of our changing society. [46]

And on yet another pillar, we are reminded of the castle's effect on today's society:

> A castle stands for power. A ruined castle reminds us that power can fade. Control has shifted, over the centuries, from this castle to the town, from the nobles to the ordinary people. [47]

Herein lies English Heritage's message, that the past belongs to everyone, wherever they live and whatever their background.

Summary

Despite different interpretative and presentational approaches at each of their sites, English Heritage aims to attract, educate and entertain. To achieve this, a wider perspective than as of old has been taken with both its interpretation and presentation. Whether by casting the net further, English Heritage dilutes the

message, thus 'emulsifying heritage into demeaning falsehood' [48], and whether it is letting the academic minority slip the net, is open to interpretation.

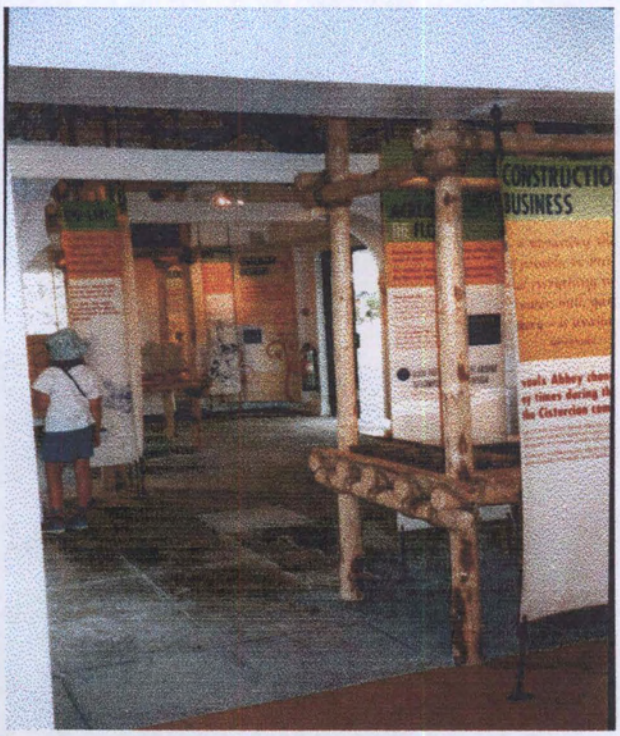

Figure 7. Rievaulx Abbey Exhibition opened in May 2000.

Figure 8. The new exhibition at Richmond Castle, Yorkshire, opened in July 2000. It employs various media. The entrance to the exhibition, shown here, includes a computerized screen, objects displayed next to the screen, models and display panel.

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CHAPTER 3

The Significance of Beeston Castle

Interpretation is the study of a resource, the aim being to establish its meaning, relevance and place in history, thereby highlighting the individuality and distinctiveness of a monument. From here, the selection process chooses what aspects of significance are to be presented. Beeston Castle, Cheshire, is considered significant for a variety of reasons, these being outlined below. We commence with the significance of its design and layout in the context both of its particular purpose and of developments in military architecture, generally.

Beeston Castle, Cheshire (Location: Figure 10), is renowned, in particular, for its siting at a head of a great, rocky promontory, which on the north and west, rises sheer from the Cheshire Plain several hundred feet below. The Beeston Crag, being virtually inaccessible, was in a position to control the main medieval route from Chester and the Midlands to the south of England.

In 1225, Earl Ranulf de Blundeville, began to build Beeston Castle. Chester was his principal castle in Cheshire used for residence, law courts and treasury. Suggestions as to Beeston's intended purpose, which are discussed further in Chapter 4, are that a change in the King's advisers left Ranulf less influential and secure; new ideas in castle building gave the opportunity to build a different and more sophisticated type of castle and the crag at Beeston provided an ideal site. It is believed that Ranulf set about the creation of an impregnable stronghold, not just for security, but also to enhance his standing as earl of Chester; a symbol of his power and importance. [1]

The purpose of Beeston Castle appears to be a mixture of defence, offence and prestige, although we can only speculate as to which of these was most influential. In addition, it is generally agreed that the definition and purpose of a castle, castles widely believed to have been introduced to England primarily following the Norman Conquest in 1066, to be a 'seriously fortified (...) residence of a lord'. [2] They had a private as opposed to a communal function, [3] and it is now believed that the medieval castle was considered to be, therefore, both a fortified residence and

residential fortress. [4] However, the castle's defensive role largely controlled the castle's form, design and development, but in action its role and military potential were at least as much offensive as defensive. [5] Indeed, the medieval castle not only controlled the countryside militarily, but also symbolically, socially, politically, administratively, economically, and often judicially and religiously. In addition, the castle often played a colonization role, where it was built within or alongside a newly established medieval town.

The significance of Beeston Castle's design and layout is now discussed relative to its speculative purpose. It is believed that Ranulf used innovative ideas for the design of his castle at Beeston, copied from Middle-Eastern fortifications encountered during his earlier Crusade, with the abandonment of the donjon or keep; their hill-top sites (Figure 13), and their vast rock-cut ditches. [6] The castle was planned in two parts: an Inner Bailey sited on the highest point, with a high, precipitous natural defence to the north and a rock-cut ditch to the south and an Outer Bailey with walls, towers and gatehouse, following the contours of the natural scarp, as well as a prehistoric rampart. The plan of the castle, therefore, was influenced by existing earthworks and by the topography.

The Outer Gatehouse D-shaped towers were three storeys high. There was a gate, but no drawbridge. A later medieval square tower (Figure 15) was added to the side of the left tower to extend the accommodation of the towers and to provide latrines. Documentary evidence suggests that prisoners from the war in Wales, for example, may have been held in the windowless room here. [7] The five (remaining) towers along the outer wall (Figure16) are open-backed and D-shaped, so that if an enemy did gain access to them, they would not be sheltered from attack from the Inner Bailey. There is evidence of stairs to the wall walk, which was protected by battlements. There were probably at least five more towers in the outer curtain wall.

In the Outer Bailey, there would have been wooden buildings and tents when troops were garrisoned here. [8] The inner ditch is about 9 metres deep. The Inner Gatehouse, as with the Outer, has two D-shaped towers. Access to the single first floor chambers was by a doorway on the first floor, reached by a ladder or a wooden stair. The gatehouse (Figures 17 and 18) had a single structure above and

was bigger than most contemporary keeps although it probably did not have the same number of floors (Figure 19). It is likely that the constable of the castle lived here. [9] In addition to the Inner Gatehouse, there were also three separate wall towers, one of which, at least, was of keep-like proportions. All the towers were bigger than they needed to be for purely defensive purposes. Added to the gatehouse, they 'must have provided more than adequate compensation for any shortage of living space occasioned by the lack of a keep'. [10]

At the southeast corner of the Inner Bailey, a length of wall survives at its full height with the remains of a walkway and beamholes for a hourd or mahicolation (Figure 20). The Inner Bailey was the most secure part of the castle. Here, Ranulf planned his living quarters, but they were never built, possibly due to his death in 1232, although the rock was levelled in places in readiness and there is a well, to the east of the gateway (being one of the deepest in the country, 124 metres deep). Although there is no indication of a living hall, there is, however, evidence of timber constructions within the Bailey [11], and significantly, Pennant, in his work *The Journey from Chester to London* of 1782, observed that, 'Within the yard is a rectangular building, the chapel of the place'. [12]

Despite the apparent absence of many of the buildings necessary for the castle to function as an administrative centre and residence, enough accommodation was provided by small halls and chambers in the gatehouses and by chambers in at least two of the towers in the Inner Ward, for the basic requirements of the constable and the visiting earl, his officials and guests. [13] Indeed, the seemingly absent interior features suggests that the use of Beeston Castle was limited [14], and although there are documentary references to further building works in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, no evidence of a hall or kitchen have been found and the castle was never completed. From remaining architectural and archaeological evidence, it would appear that the castle's purpose was more offensive and defensive, than (lordly) residential, although evidence of both exists.

Beeston Castle is a keepless enclosure castle with integrated fortification, comparable with other newly built castles within Ranulf's earldom, namely Bolingbroke, Lincolnshire, (refer to Chapter 4). It is important in terms of

developments in military architecture, generally. The Tower Keep, or donjon, was a feature of many castles in all periods, although very popular as the 'pièce maîtresse' in the twelfth century. In the thirteenth century, the rectangular keep made way for the cylindrical and polygonal keeps, and at the same time, there was a range of castles built without keeps, consisting of curtain walls, regular or round D-shaped towers and, in many cases, twin-towered gate-houses. [15] There is no Tower Keep at Beeston. Instead, two new devices were used to withstand attack: powerful gatehouses at each entrance and mural towers along curtain walls.

The entrance to the castle was potentially the weakpoint and the earliest form of gatehouse was a single tower of at least two storeys, pierced by an entrance passage. In the thirteenth century, increasing attention was paid to the problem of defending gateways. Allen Brown states that, 'from here the way seems straight, via for example, Beeston (...) to the great twin-towered gatehouse of the 'Edwardian' and later periods' [16], as at Caerphilly and Beaumaris, Wales, for example.

Curtain walls and mural towers were evident in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the towers mainly rectangular; D-shaped and cylindrical towers being introduced mainly in the thirteenth century, returning to the rectangular ones in the later Middle Ages. Mural towers provided both a defensive and residential role and the implications for the future were apparent: for the keep was dispensed with altogether, leaving only the bailey defended by flanking towers.

None of Beeston's military architectural features were entirely new. However, the importance of Beeston is that for the first time, the strength of the fortifications rested entirely on the gatehouses and mural towers, and the gatehouse appeared in a fully developed form, playing a major role in the defence of the castle.

In the course of the thirteenth century, the early medieval castles, being the earthwork and timber enclosure, the motte-and-bailey castle (Figure 23) and the shell keep, had been abandoned. The medieval castle had achieved in architectural terms its 'apogée', opening with Beeston and Bolingbroke, and ending with Edward's Beaumaris, providing both the ultimate military strong point and the best residential accommodation. Beeston is the forerunner of the formidable

gatehouses of Edward I's great concentric castles in North Wales (Figure 24), built at the end of the thirteenth century, as well as, to some degree, the integrated fortification of the quadrangular castle (Figure 25).

The design of Beeston Castle suggests the actual or potential fulfillment of any military, judicial, social, economic and prestigious purposes. Its residential role was intended to be wider and evidence of an initial religious purpose is dubious. Clearly, Beeston did not play a colonization role due to its siting. As a medieval castle, it played a significant part in the developments of military architecture from the thirteenth century and before the decline of the castle following the fifteenth century. The medieval castle represents a complex balance between the site, the need for defence or the show of it, and accommodation. Indeed, 'Castles were not only splendid buildings in their own right but they were the self-conscious frames for the lives of their builders'. [17] Beeston Castle appears to be no exception, for even in its incomplete state of construction, the castle was a striking symbol of lordship, dominating the surrounding countryside.

Continuity

Beeston Castle stands on a sandstone ridge, rising from the glacial till of the eastern and western lowland. Several summits form the mid-Cheshire Ridge, these being at Bickerton (212 m), Raw Head (227 m), Peckforton (190 m), Beeston (140 m), Helsby (141 m) and Frodsham (146 m), each the site of an early settlement. [18] This group of defended prehistoric sites clearly intended to exploit the plain on either side. By comparison Beeston is very much larger than all except Eddisbury. Beeston and Eddisbury may be seen as the key sites of the area, representing large Iron Age developed hillforts. [19] What is special about Beeston, however, is that it was recently discovered that the hillfort was preceded by a much rarer Bronze Age defended enclosure and Beeston can now be added to the lists of both Bronze Age and Iron Age defended sites. [20]

It has been suggested that a Roman road ran from Deva (Chester) to Nantwich by way of Beeston village, eventually linking with Newcastle and Derby. [21] Although activity in the Roman period at the foot of the hill at Beeston cannot as yet be related with certainty to the occupation of the hillfort [22], there were some indications

of Iron Age/Romano-British continuity at the possible settlement at the castle's Lower Green by the modern gatehouse, although the nature of the site was ill-defined by excavations. [23]

It is believed that the pronoun of Beeston's Anglo-Saxon place-name, probably means 'rock, or hill, where a market is held', inferring that the crag on which Beeston castle stands was a landmark at a notable commercial centre. The Welsh name for Beeston, however, was *Vel allt* or *y Fel allt*, meaning 'bee rock' or honey cliff or rock. [24]

Beeston Castle, having been in the hands of Ranulf, a powerful earl, supported by the Welsh, could have been a military threat to the forces of the crown itself. [25] Following the death of Ranulf's successor, John, the seventh earl, King Henry III (1216-72) took Beeston and the earldom of Chester into his own hands. The earldom had become too important, and Beeston too powerful, to be outside the king's control, especially at a time when trouble was threatening from Wales. [26]

Here follows about 60 years of intermittent warfare. King Henry's use for Beeston was mainly as a base to assemble troops and supplies for his campaigns against the Welsh, and as a place to keep prisoners and hostages. In 1254, Henry gave Beeston, together with all the other castles and lands of the County of Chester, to his eldest son Prince Edward, the future King Edward I, who was also given the Earl of Chester title. Simon de Montfort seized the royal estates in Cheshire and held Prince Edward hostage in 1265. The prince escaped, defeated de Montfort at the battle of Evesham and reoccupied Beeston. Edward made war on the Welsh, but used Chester as his base. [28] Nevertheless, major repair works to the castle were undertaken at the end of the thirteenth and during the fourteenth centuries. [29]

By the fifteenth century, Beeston had fallen into a state of decay. It is not clear why, although with the poverty of the Lancastrian Crown in the mid fifteenth century, together with a certain slackness which might well have crept in with the coming of more peaceful times, these were probably the most important reasons. [30]

The first English antiquary, John Leland, travelled the length and breadth of Henry VIII's kingdom between 1534 and 1543, and often cited ruinous feudal strongholds. His poem about the goddess, Fama (Fame) [31], in which he foretells Beeston's restoration for Edward VI (King of England from 1422), demonstrates that he was clearly overwhelmed by Beeston's ruins at the time. (See Appendix 1).

By the sixteenth century Beeston was of no further use to the Crown. A local landowner, Sir Hugh Beeston of Beeston Hall, who allowed some of the poorer members of his family to live in part of the castle and use the land for farming, acquired it. The castle was, however, refortified during the 1642-49 Civil War between King and Parliament, when the castle was last garrisoned. The Royalist garrison in the castle surrendered in 1646 after a long and hard siege. Appendix 2 summarizes the event. On 3 February, 1646, a command was given and warrants sent to the several parishes of Bunbury, Tarporley, Wrenbury and Acton,

> for the pullinge downe and utter defacinge of Beeston Castle which before Whitsuntide was performed. Onelie the gatehouse in the lower warde and part of some towers in the higher warde weire lefte standinge, (...). [32]

In 1703, a tenant, George Walley, was renting and living in the 'castlegate', probably the Outer Gatehouse. Ownership of the castle passed by marriage to Sir Thomas Mostyn of Mostyn Hall, Flintshire (Clwyd). The hill was let for grazing and quarried for stone. In 1840, John, the first Lord Tollemache, Member of Parliament for South Cheshire from 1841 to 1868 and later for West Cheshire, purchased the Beeston estate. Quarrying for stone and sand continued, however now the castle began to be valued as a picturesque ruin. Some repairs were carried out and in 1846 the present Gatehouse was built at the entrance and visitors were permitted to visit the ruins. [33]

Lord Tollemache commenced neighbouring Peckforton Castle in 1844, which was designed by the architect, Anthony Salvin. It is considered an excellent specimen of a medieval castle of the early Edwardian period, being,

> a decided ornament to this part of Cheshire. Next to Beeston, perhaps, in strength of position, its situation near the ruins of that fortress, adds

considerably to its attractions, particularly as seen from the easterly side, where its great circular tower stands out in bold relief against the neighbouring mountains of Wales. [34]

Clearly, Beeston Castle was deliberately incorporated into this Romantic vision, thus hinting at Tollemache's display of legitimacy through continuity. [35]

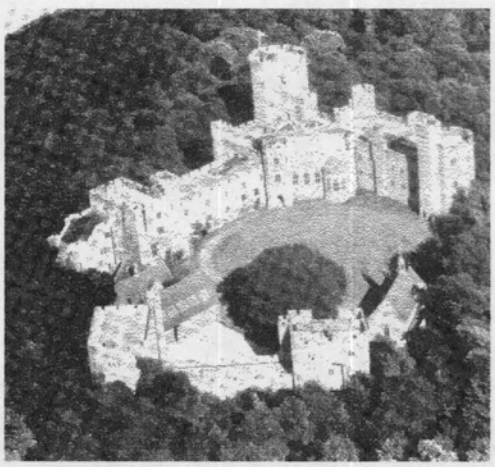

Figure 9. Peckforton Castle was built between 1844 and 1850 for Lord John Tollemache, owner of Beeston and the surrounding estate. It was designed by Anthony Salvin.

The Beeston Festival, a two-day event, was organised by The Ancient Order of Oddfellows, starting in 1844 and Beeston Castle Fête continues as an annual event to this day. [36] Lord Tollemache's, descendants placed the castle in the guardianship of the Ministry of Public Building and Works in 1959. It is now in the care of English Heritage. [37] English Heritage hold a number of archaeological open days, living history and theatrical events throughout the year. However, Beeston is best known for its spectacular views. From the great crag of Beeston Castle, can be seen the Welsh mountains in the west to the Pennines in the East, and to the Wrekin in the south. On a clear day, eight counties can be seen.

Archaeological Significance

There have been significant archaeological finds at Beeston Castle, which indicate its importance as a site, especially when placed in a wider context. It must be remembered, however, that what may be of significance to today's archaeologist, may represent our predecessors' cast-offs, as warned by Merriman:

> Objects, once with distinctive meanings in particular social systems, become homogeneous commodities for study and display in a process described as 'shopfront commodification (...) static and removed from history avoiding any suggestion that history is a dynamic process involving conflict and change. [38]

There is a wealth of evidence for Late Bronze Age and Iron Age occupation in the form of long-lived defences, a range of pottery and other finds, wide-ranging radio-carbon dates, and the possibility of major crop storage and metalworking centres located on the same site at different periods. All demonstrate that a considerable period of complex occupation is represented at Beeston. [39] That metalwork was produced on the site indicates its importance regarding its use as foundation deposits in the Late Bronze Age defences. Ellis states that if the crop storage complex can be shown to be Late Bronze Age, perhaps preceding the metalworking, it will represent the first such evidence for large-scale crop storage in Britain at that time. [40] The scarcity of diagnostic artefacts from excavated hillforts in Cheshire hinders the establishment of a chronological sequence for their occupation. [41] Beeston Castle excavation interpretation is, therefore, important in providing pointers in a wider context.

Likewise, for the Roman period, few finds have been made on or near the line of the Mid-Cheshire Ridge except at Beeston Castle, where excavations have yielded pottery of the second and third centuries. [42] As indicated above, the small quantity of Romano-British finds do not indicate reuse of the hillfort, although the Roman period radiocarbon date, from a rampart layer, raises this possibility. [43] The significance of the excavations lies additionally in the important group of finds closely datable to the Civil War period of 1643 – 1645. [44]

Summary

Beeston Castle is clearly a historically significant site for a number of reasons, not least for the continuity of its site spanning millennia. It remains significant for today's purposes. Interestingly, Hodder asks, 'If each historical context is unique and particular, how can we interpret it?' [45] It is a valid question though difficult to

answer. However, as is clear from Beeston's archaeological significance, as well as its continuity, that perceived significance is interpreted only after placing it in a broader context.

Figure 10. Beeston Castle Location. National Grid Ref. SJ 538592. Taken from Ellis (ed.), *Book of Excavations. Beeston Castle Cheshire* (1993).

Figure 11. Drawing of current aerial view of Beeston Castle. Taken from Ellis (ed.), Book of Excavations. Beeston Castle Cheshire (1993).

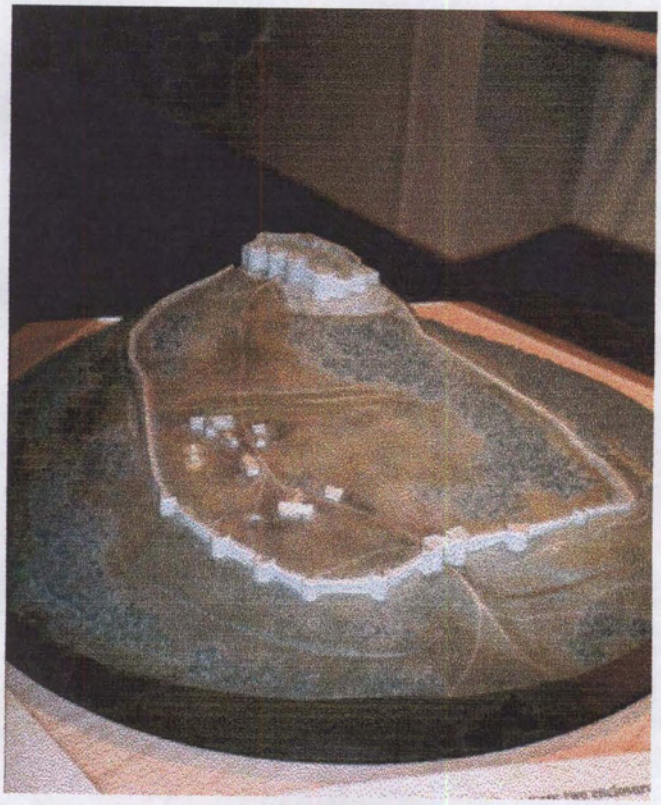

Figure 12. Scale model of Beeston Castle showing layout from main Outer Gateway. Taken from Beeston Castle English Heritage exhibition.

Figure 13. Beeston Castle. Hill top site, surrounded by Cheshire Plain.

Figure 14. Scale model of supposed Iron Age layout at Beeston. Taken from Beeston Castle English Heritage exhibition.

Figure 15. The later medieval square tower provided latrines and additional accommodation and is thought to have housed Welsh prisoners.

Figure 16. The Outer Wall. Beeston Castle.

Figure 17. The Inner Gatehouse as it is today.

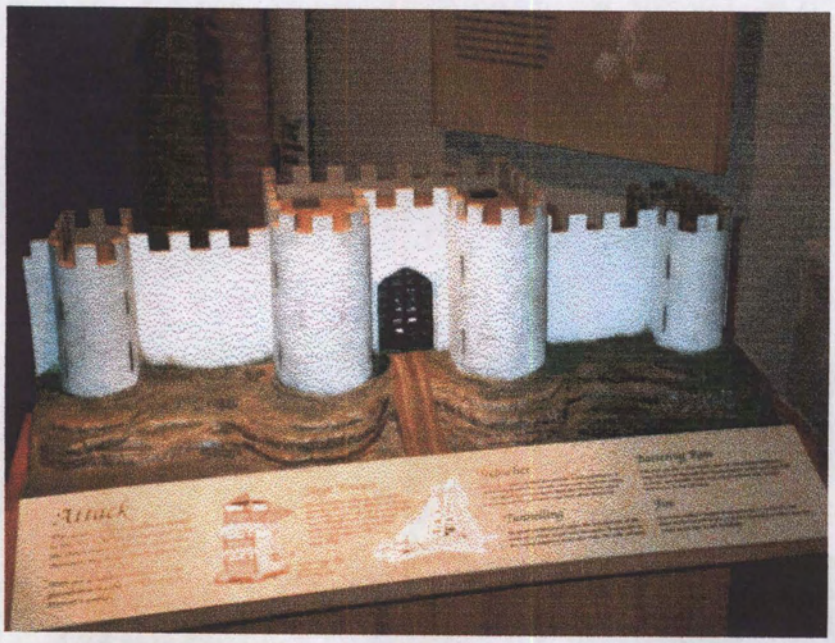

Figure 18. Interpretative model of the Inner Gatehouse, Beeston Castle, in mid-thirteenth century. Taken from Beeston Castle English Heritage exhibition.

Figure19. The Gatehouse from inside the Inner Bailey.

Figure 20. Southeast corner of Inner Bailey, Beeston Castle, and showing remains of walkway and beamholes for mahicolation.

Figure 21. Inner Bailey wall at the edge of the cliff where there were no towers. The wall is thinner here, presumably where no attack was expected.

Figure 22. One of the Inner Bailey D-shaped towers projecting from the rock face and rising above the rock-cut ditch.

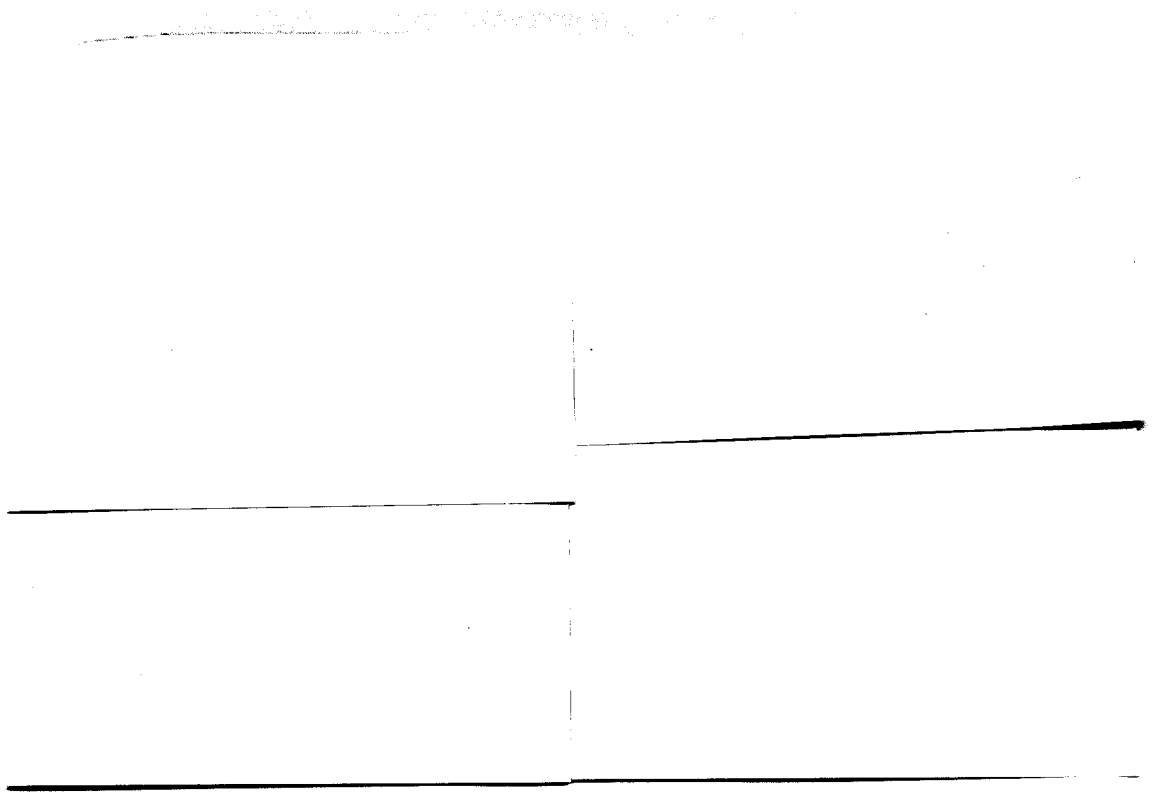

Figure 23. Copy of drawing of an imaginative reconstruction of a motte-and-bailey castle. Taken from Allen Brown, *The Architecture of Castles* (1984).

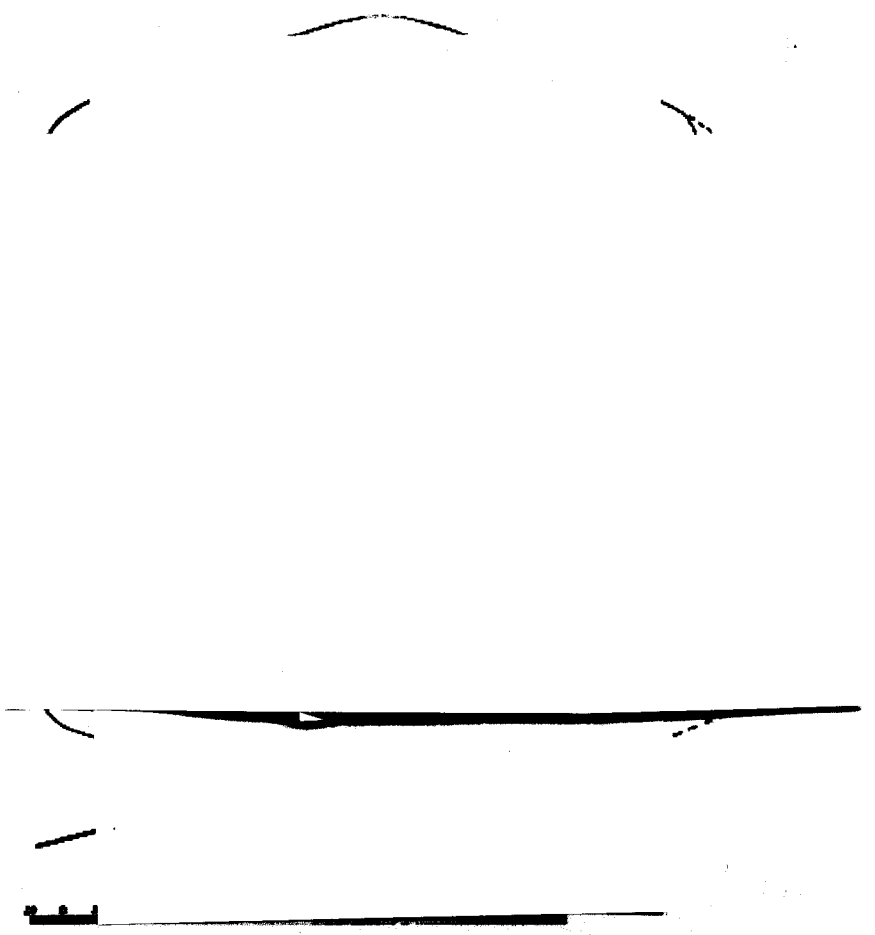

Figure 24. The concentric castle, generally associated with the period of Edward I, is one line within another, and the former overtopping the latter. Beaumaris, above, is a good example. Taken from Allen Brown, *English Castles* (1970).

Figure 25. Ground floor plan of Bodiam Castle, East Sussex. This type of castle is one planned and unified structure with residences arranged on the quadrangular plan and a tower at each corner. Taken from Allen Brown, *English Castles* (1970).

BEESTON CASTLE FESTIVAL.

THE FORTY-FOURTH

ANNUAL FESTIVAL

(By kind permission of Lord Tollemache),

WILL be held under the direction of the Committee of Management, on the picturesque ruins of

BEESTON CASTLE,

ON MONDAY & TUESDAY, JUNE 13TH AND 14TH, 1887,

For the benefit of the Widows' and Orphans' Fund of the Beeston Castle District, Manchester Unity of Oddfellows.

Ample security against rain is provided by several Spacious Waterproof Tents.

STREATHER'S CELEBRATED STRING BAND (Monday), MARCHANT'S STRING BAND (Tuesday), and the NANTWICH MILITARY and QUADRILLE BAND will be in attendance, and DANCING will commence at Two o'clock.

Tea on the Tables from Three o'clock. Tickets, One Shilling each; children, half-price.

ADMISSION:—First Day, 1s. 6d.; Second, 1s.; Children, half-price.

N.B.—A Special Train will leave Beeston Castle for Crewe, Nantwich, Whitchurch, and Intermediate Stations at 10-0 p.m. each day.

☞ Passengers will be booked at Cheap Fares from Whitchurch, Wrenbury, Nantwich, Crewe, Worleston, and Calveley. For particulars see bills issued by the Railway Company.

Figure 26. Advertisement for the Beeston Castle Festival Fete, 1887. Taken from Bate, *Peckforton and Beeston. 200 years of Village Life in a Changing World* (2000).

Figure 27. Drawing of one of the socketed axes from the Late Bronze Age. Taken from Ellis (ed.), *Book of Excavations. Beeston Castle, Cheshire* (1993).

Figure 28. Romano-British brooch. Taken from Ellis (ed.), Book of Excavations. Beeston Castle, Cheshire (1993).

Figures 29 and 30. (Left to right:) Medieval (post thirteenth century) ivory die and topaz nineteenth century fob. Taken from Ellis (ed.), Book of Excavations. Beeston Castle (1993).

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Chapter 3

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22. Elrington (ed.), *The Victoria County History of Chester. Vol I.*, p. 108.
23. Ellis (ed.), *Book of Excavations*, p.91.

24. G. Barraclough (Ed.), *The Charters of the Anglo-Norman Earls of Chester, c. 1071-1237,* (Gloucester, 1988), p.302.
25. B.M.C. Husain, *Cheshire Under the Norman Earls. 1066-1237* (London and Prescot, 1973), p.104.
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27. *Ibid.,* p.15.
28. Moffatt, *Beeston Castle*, p.1.
29. Weaver, *Beeston Castle,* pp. 16-17.
30. J.T. Driver, *Cheshire in the Later Middle Ages. 1399-1540* (London and Prescot, 1971), p.54.
31. J. Pennant, *The Journey From Chester To London*, p.13.
32. (As quoted in) F.H. Crossley, *Cheshire*, (London, 1949), p. 237.
33. Weaver, *Beeston Castle*, p.22.
34. Ormerod, *History of Cheshire. Vol 2. Eddisbury Hundred* (London, 1882, 2nd edn.), p. 304.
35. Indeed, the analogy and thread of continuity can be linked back to Beeston Castle, where (Ranulf) 'sought to evoke in some manner the *moeurs* of chivalry, the life-style of the great, and the legends of the past' at a time of the castle proper 'when masonry structures were (...) as intentionally evocative and symbolic as any late eighteenth-and nineteenth-century castellated mansion of the Romantic Revival'. C.L.H. Coulson, 'Structural Symbolism in medieval Castle Architecture', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association. 1979. Vol. CXXXII,* pp. 74 and 73, respectively.
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CHAPTER 4

Power in the Landscape

To view Beeston Castle as an isolated monument, divorced from the landscape, is to take one piece of the jigsaw and guess at its totality. The past rarely presents us with all the pieces, but if we see the monument in its landscape, we see that the 'plan of the monument is no longer as central as it once was'. [1]

Beeston Castle's existence owes itself to an immensely powerful individual. Ranulf de Blundeville was, for much of his life, the most important and powerful magnate of England. [2] Interestingly, the source of Ranulf's strength 'lay not in Chester, but in the immense territorial power he had built up (...) across the length and breadth of central England'. [3] Ranulf's interest lay principally in the 'great triangle of land whose northern baseline extended from Chester in the west to Lincoln in the east, and whose apex lay to the south at Coventry'. [4] Appendix 3 gives an outline of Ranulf's history.

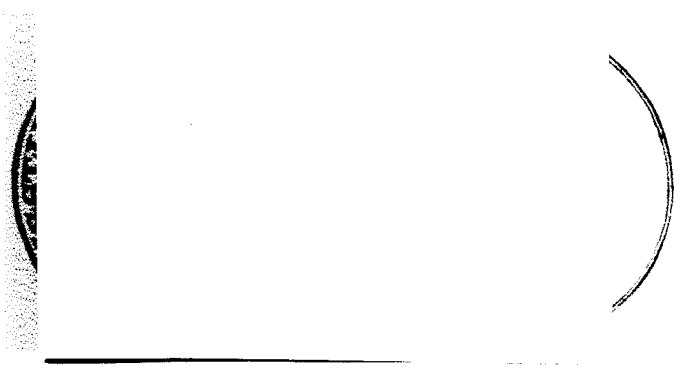

Figure 31. The seal of Ranulf, sixth Earl of Chester. The inscription reads 'The seal of Ranulf, earl of Chester and Lincoln'. Taken from English Heritage's Beeston Castle guidebook (1993).

Williamson believes that regional variations in the Norman lords' power over the farming population were not directly manifested in the landscape, for the lords did not attempt to interfere in the day-to-day management of the countryside. [5] Not all

historians agree with this view, and relative to Earl Ranulf, there is certainly evidence to the contrary. To what extent, however, Ranulf's power affected the immediate landscape and settlement pattern with its agglomerated village (Beeston) and dispersed farmsteads encircling the hill, would deserve separate detailed study. [6]

Evidence exists to indicate Ranulf's power did affect the landscape under his control. As the problems of population pressure compounded in the thirteenth century, the discontent and land-hunger increased. Ranulf made concessions in the eighth clause of his Cheshire Charter of 1215-16, in which he laid down the conditions of land enclosure. He gave his barons the right to assart their lands within the arable area of the forest and grow crops on land formerly cultivated and free from wood without payment. [7] In addition, Dieulacres Abbey (Staffordshire), founded by Ranulf, cleared land at Pulford, Cheshire for assarts, and in 1314, there is mention of the newly tilled land. [8]

Between 1225 and 1226, there was a series of five agreements between Ranulf and specified groups of freemen, by which the latter quitclaimed to the earl their rights in 500 acres of common pasture in the West Fen of Bolingbroke, Lincolnshire. [9] Barraclough stated that the key sentence in the agreements is that Ranulf may enclose the 500 acres 'with ditches of a breadth and depth at his pleasure'. [10] Barraclough suggested that this implies an intention to undertake the work of draining the fen on a considerable scale, and, if this was the case, it would appear to contradict the prevailing view that drainage, except in a small, piecemeal way by individual farmers, did not get underway before the close of the fifteenth century. It also suggests that Ranulf was an early entrepreneur with a deliberate policy of large-scale reclamation. Indeed, Barraclough claimed that evidence suggests that he was consolidating his holdings and buying up land in the fens, presumably as a preliminary to reclamation at this time. [11]

Apart from clearing and draining land for farming, Ranulf was responsible for other landscape changes. For example, King John granted the castle and manor of

Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, to Ranulf in 1215, and Ranulf began to lay down the park around 1225. [12] In addition, Ranulf was the founder of four boroughs: Frodsham, Macclesfield, Leek, Staffordshire and Salford, Lancashire. [13] Allen Brown, Prestwich and Coulson point out that,

> Lords would not have founded boroughs in their lands so freely were they not of obvious economic importance; they were centres of commercial activity and Ranulf saw their financial importance to himself, as did most English lords of this period. [14]

Further evidence of this power can be related to Ranulf's translation of Poulton Abbey, Cheshire, creating Dieulacres Abbey, Staffordshire, in about 1214. Although frequent incursions of the Welsh appear to be the main reason for the translation [15], Aston's theory regarding new sites chosen, is that they were not determined by the physical layout of the landscape, be it in town or country. Aston argues for the power of land ownership, stating,

> The real reasons why particular sites were chosen can be explained best with reference to the land ownership and tenurial arrangements existing in the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. (...) Perhaps the movement of sites in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries reflects more the limited choice in the 'landscape of ownership' available to monk-planners than to any physical difficulties. [16]

Beeston Castle, Cheshire Castles and Beyond

The post-Conquest castles of Cheshire, played their part in the consolidation of Norman control, particularly in view of the threat from Wales. Ranulf's main seat was at Chester Castle, which was the centre of the county administration. However, most Cheshire castles were private feudal strongholds, which were domestic and symbolic, acting as links in the chain of authority within Cheshire. The most extensive surviving fortifications are found at Beeston and Halton, and to a lesser extent at Chester, the greater part of this castle being a later rebuild. Less

well known are the earthworks that mark the sites of motte and bailey castles. [17] Figure 35 shows the siting of baronial and minor strongholds, and Appendix 4 lists these. Of the surviving ruins, Halton, closed to the public, dates from the early Norman period, and Beeston dates from the later period, notably at a time when the building of the baronial castle was on the decline. [18]

Ranulf had control of more than twenty baronial castles, these being listed in Appendix 5. In addition, Alexander cites that the only castles believed to be built by Ranulf other than Beeston and its two sister castles, were those raised at Deganwy, Caernavonshie, a rebuild of Llewelyn's own castle; Holywell, Flintshire and Treffynon, all in about 1210 following the ravaging of Ranulf's lands by Llewelyn. [19] Further details of Treffynon have not been located, the *Annals of Worcester* [20] only mentioning Deganwy and Holywell. The latter was a late example of an earthwork castle. Robert of Rhuddlan's castle at Deganwy (about 1088), was rebuilt by Ranulf in 1216. It is likely to have been a stone rebuild and was subsequently rebuilt on many occasions. [21] These castles were clearly built for military and territorial purposes, and on behalf of King John.

Beeston and its Sister Castles

Three castles were erected or entirely reconstructed in the 1220's by Ranulph, being Beeston, Bolingbroke, Lincolnshire and Chartley, Staffordshire.

At Bolingbroke, (Ordnance Survey reference TF 3492 6492), Ranulf once again, shows how his power directly affected the landscape. In England, castles generally were imposed on an existing pattern of settlement rather than resulting in a reorganisation. [22] Bolingbroke is an exception, where the castle was built, interestingly, in the plain below the twelfth century site at Dewy hill. The present church appears to have been re-oriented to face the new site.

Not only the siting of Bolingbroke differed drastically from Beeston, but also so did its plan: The castle is hexagonal, enclosing a courtyard, stone-backed mural towers and a moat. The striking similarities, however, are with the great gatehouse with D-

shaped towers and the absence of a keep. In Holles' *Lincolnshire Notes, 1634-42*, he describes the gatehouse as 'very stately over a fayre drawbridge: The gate house is a very uniforme & strong building'. [23]

As with Beeston, Bolingbroke is an enclosure castle. This form developed considerably during the twelfth century when defensive experience gained during the Crusades was applied to their design. [24] Enclosure castles such as Bolingbroke are rare nationally, with only 120 recorded examples. Belonging to the highest levels of society, they frequently acted as major administrative centres and formed the *foci* for developing settlement patterns. [25]

Edward I visited the castle in 1292 and may well have been influenced by its design [26], although his castle building in Wales had commenced by that date. Bolingbroke had an important history as a residence and defensive structure. In 1399, Bolingbroke became Crown land. The Duchy of Lancaster placed the site in the guardianship of the Ministry of Works in 1949. In 1984, its care passed to English Heritage, and since 1995, the Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire has managed the site on their behalf. [27]

The plan of Beeston was influenced by existing earthworks and by the topography. Similarly, at Chartley Castle, Staffordshire (Ordnance Survey reference SK 0103 2849), the layout of Ranulf's stone castle was dictated by the plan of the existing motte and bailey. Chartley was originally constructed during the 1090's and belonged to the Earls of Chester. Once again, the design differs from that of Beeston: The motte was utilized to accommodate a circular keep. However, a similar gatehouse; open-backed towers, along the south and east sides, and curtain wall were constructed on top of earlier earthworks. Much of the castle has been pulled down and a nineteenth century folly created on the mound, but two cylindrical towers have been left standing. The tower dimensions and form are almost identical with the bases of those revealed by excavation at the very different style and structure at Bolingbroke. [28] The plan of the gateway resembles that of Beeston

and Bolingbroke, with a tower either side of a funnelled entrance across a drawbridge. [29]

The exact location of the village of Chartley remains unknown. It is believed that one of the factors leading to its desertion would have been the reduction of the garrison to the castle in later years. In addition, land surrounding the castle was established as a deer park, probably during the late thirteenth century. [30] The castle lies in the Parish of Stowe within a manorial landscape today centred upon the medieval foundation of nearby Chartley Hall, the present occupants of which, currently own the castle. [31]

According to Leland, 'Old yerle Randol, as sum say, lay in (Chartley) when he builded Deul'encres Abbay'. [32]

Religion and the Landscape

Medieval men, according to Alexander, patronized monasteries for various reasons: Tradition, which appears in Ranulf's close ties to St. Werburgh, Chester, the family's Benedictine foundation in his *caput*, although in no other case; prestige, of which Ranulf had a superfluity; devotion, of which there is little evidence; spiritual benefits which seldom appear as a motivation in the earl's charters to religion and economic benefits for the patron, which abound. [33] Clearly, alienation of land, property and money to religion, was an economic as well as a religious decision.

Alexander stated that the earl gave only one grant of property (aside from confirmation) to a Cistercian house other than Dieulacres, Staffordshire, and that this was a grant of land in Macclesfield forest to Combermere for making a grange. Greene, however, mentions that Ranulph had founded the Franciscan Friary in Coventry. [34] Ranulph had indeed granted a portion of Cheylesmore Park in Coventry to the Greyfriars in 1230 [35], and in 1234, four years later, and two years after Ranulph's death, the friars are recorded as using timber from Kenilworth for shingles to cover the roof of what was presumably their first church, which may well have been of wood. [36] Little is known about the buildings of the house, apart from its

fourteenth century church, the central tower of which has survived. [37] Whether Ranulf simply granted land to the Greyfriars, or indeed, founded the original timber Franciscan Friary, is not, therefore, clear.

Poulton Abbey was founded in 1153, being a cell of Combermere, Cheshire. In about 1214, although there is speculation as to the exact date, the abbey 'chiefly on account of the frequent incursions of the Welsh' [38], was removed to Dieulacres in Staffordshire. There are no remains of the chapel at Poulton, which became a grange to Dieulacres and which was in a state of decay in 1672. [39] The site is being excavated currently.

The twelfth century saw the climax in this country of monastic foundations, and Thompson remarks that those associated with castles almost cease, suggesting that piety perhaps found expression in the promotion of friaries, as well as, to some extent, a decline in castle building itself. [40] Indeed, according to Thompson's list, only one Cistercian monastery was founded in the thirteenth century and which was also, tentatively, associated with a castle, that being Dieulacres. The Cistercian house had mainly fallen out of favour by the thirteenth century.

The motives of a castle builder to found a monastery have been discussed, but, according to Alexander, for Ranulf to have taken an interest in Poulton was logical: It was threatened; it had a relationship with a great abbey of which the earl's family was patron and protector; it was located in Cheshire and translating the extant house was cheaper than founding a new one. [41] While the *Annals of Dieulacres Abbey* ascribe Ranulf's motives to a dream [42], Emery, Gibbins and Matthews suggest that it is also possible that the endowment of a monastery was a precondition for Earl Ranulph's divorce in 1199. [43] See Appendix 3.

Dieulacres Abbey, (Ordnance Survey reference SJ 9833 5786), lies a mile north of Leek in Staffordshire, which Ranulf made into a borough in 1214. There were four Cistercian houses founded in Staffordshire: Radmore in 1143 (moved to Warwickshire in 1154), Croxden in 1176, Dieulacres in about 1214, and Hulton in

1219. The later three post-date the period of Cistercian expansion in the first half of the twelfth century, a reflection, perhaps, of the marginal and untamed nature of North Staffordshire in the early middle ages. [44]

Dieulacres Abbey acquired large estates in the area and exploited what had been large areas of barren moorland for wool production. The abbey had a considerable impact on the local population as landlords and employers, and the abbey would have affected many people's lives in and around Leek. [45]

The Lancashire estates were the most distant of all the lands owned by the monks of Dieulacres, and they lay mainly in and around the manor of Rossall on the Flyde Coast. [46] The figures given in the *Taxatio* tell us that in 1291, as far as real estate was concerned, Dieulacres was the wealthiest monastery in Staffordshire. [47] Dieulacres had acquired estates in three counties by the end of the thirteenth century which were expanded in the fourteenth century. A picture emerges of the taking in of new lands, (assarting), in the thirteenth century, as woodlands were cleared in the Meerbrook valley. New estates were being acquired at the same time and by the fourteenth century, the abbey was established and wealthy enough to begin a phase of renewed investment in the church building. [48]

Dieulacres continued to acquire land in Cheshire after 1214. The principal estate was centred on the old abbey site at Poulton, where there were 900 acres of arable land. Close by, were granges of Dodleston and Churton, and the abbey also owned salt-pits at Nantwich and Middlewich, Cheshire. [49]

The abbey was dissolved in 1538. Many people owned the site in the post medieval period and a farmhouse was built in 1612 incorporating a timber-framed gateway and worked stones from the abbey. The site of the monastery was cleared of earth and rubble in 1818 in preparation for building the ranges of farm outbuildings, which still exist. These ranges are built substantially of abbey stone and include many sculpted pieces incorporated into the walls as decoration. [50]

Today, the abbey is a scheduled monument and privately owned as part of the farmland and buildings, in which it stands. Remains are mostly buried under land owned by Abbey Farm. What is known about the abbey is largely based on a plan and report of 1818 and an Ordnance Survey of 1925. An archaeological investigation was undertaken in February 1995, and archaeological works were completed in April 1998.

Purpose

Since all three of Ranulf's castles were built about 1225, it would seem logical to view Beeston as only part of a more complete picture. An interpretation as to the purpose of Beeston, this outlined in Chapter 3, can be made only after placing it in its broader context.

The castles built prior to Ranulf's Crusader voyage in 1218, were built for King John for primarily military reasons during the territorial wars on the border between England and Wales. From the details available, these castles cannot be compared in any way to Ranulf's own castles, built after returning from the Fifth Crusade. Indeed, neither Holywell nor Deganwy were constructed to survive even to ruins, the latter having been reconstructed following further squirmishes. From 1218, however, Ranulf and Llewelyn were allies, and Ranulf's attentions and energies were diverted from the Welsh-English border. Clearly, Ranulf's castles were not built as the result of any Welsh threat, so if we are looking for a reason of defence, we must look elsewhere.

It cannot be insignificant that Ranulf appeared to plan his castles on return from the Crusade in 1220. Pennant, writing in 1782, stated that Chartley castle was built 'in 1220 (...) and to defray the experiences of this, as also of Beeston, (...) a tax was levied on all his vassals'. Pennant introduces a discrepancy with the dates here, and one that does not allow for the amassing of taxes prior to commencing the building. However, the impression is made that Ranulf was keen to build his castles on his return. Indeed, Alexander stated that Ranulf laid a tax at this time, for the

construction of Dieulacres Abbey as well. [51] Dent and Hill, in 1896, told of Ranulf returning to his home in Staffordshire in 1221, when he founded in that year, Dieulacres Abbey. [52] Matthews, having worked on the Poulton chapel excavation and relevant documentation, confirms that there is, in fact, an unresolved discrepancy as to the actual date of the Abbey's translation [53] and that the date of 1214, is far from firm.

In order to establish whether or not there were any internal political reasons for Ranulf's three castles being planned, and, therefore, with a military purpose being paramount, the known events at that time, must be examined. After King John's death in 1216, during the minority of Henry III, Ranulf exercised a major political role. Beal-Browell and others speculate that following his return from the Crusade in 1220, Ranulf's power decreased: Hubert de Burgh was supreme, and Ranulph had 'thus lost the chance of succeeding to the regency himself'. [54]

Henry began the resumption of the royal castles in April 1223. Ranulf, among others, had been instructed to yield his castles to the Crown. Ranulf, Gilbert of Gloucester and the Count of Aumale were said to have 'strongly and futilely objected, unable even to speak with the King'. [55] However, by the end of the year, Ranulf and his following peacefully surrendered their royal castles and custodies to the king, after being assured that the royal policy would apply to all and respect everyone's interests. Ranulf handed over the castles of Bridgenorth, Shrewsbury and Lancaster, as well as his shrievalties over Shopshire and Staffordshire (a joint office), and the custody of the shrievalty and honour of Lancaster.

Alexander asks the valid question, 'Was Ranulf making a show of strength in reaction to the political events of 1223-4?' [56] Alexander believed that this could be supported by the fact that the earl did not attest royal charters between 23 October 1223 and 25 February 1224, and by his apparent withdrawal from national politics from January 1224 until the summer of 1227. [57] Although we do not have enough evidence to dispute this, the suggestion must be weighed up with other factors. For instance, as Alexander stated himself, 'one of the dominating principles of Ranulf's

entire public career was loyalty to his sovereign'. [58] Indeed, personal success must have depended on the cooperation with the king and only a handful could have built castles with political dissatisfaction in mind. Ranulf appears to have been planning his castles at an earlier date than 1223-4, and despite the obvious political rumblings during those two years, which were amicably resolved, Ranulf does not appear to have fallen from Henry's favour: Although royal grants of land were both sparse and small, there were exceptions, for example, in 1230, when Henry granted Ranulf all the royal demesne in Lancashire between the rivers Ribble and Mersey, that is, Liverpool and the two wapentakes of Salford, West Derby and Leyland. [59] Significantly, (see Chapter 3), Ranulf was still building at least one of his (arguably primarily defensive) castles, that is Beeston, at that time.

While insecurity may well have played a part, Ranulf 'increasingly in his later years, came to regard himself as possessed of semi-autonomous princely status', and that 'undoubtedly he sought independence from royal control'. [60] While there is a question over the date of Dieulacres Abbey's foundation, the castle building and the deer park he laid in Newcastle under Lyme (see above), all believed to have started around 1225, is perhaps indicative of Ranulf using his power to consolidate his position. Thacker puts forward the suggestion that Ranulf's 'acquisitiveness in his later years was prompted by a desire to preserve his Chester earldom from dismemberment'. [61]

As Thacker states, by 1215, Ranulf had been married fifteen years to his second wife and had still produced no children. In 1220, he had taken custody of his nephew, John the Scot, whose father, David, earl of Huntingdon, had died in the previous year. He also had three sisters with descendants' rights, and perhaps Ranulf felt the need to acquire as much land as possible in order to 'provide adequately for his coheirs and transmit his senior earldom intact'. [62]

If Cheshire baronial castles were mainly domestic and symbolic (above), is there any reason why Ranulf's could not have been? Although the building of baronial castles was on the decline in the thirteenth century [63], Ranulph brought back the

latest castle designs from his travels and had the power and influence to create them for himself and be at the forefront of castle design. After all, he had only built previously, and defensively at that, for King John, and all other castles and buildings under his control had, in the main, been inherited or granted.

Thompson points out that although strongly defended, the small size of Bolingbroke, (and indeed, this applies equally to Chartley), suggests that pleasure played an important part in the motives of construction. [64] Bolingbroke could have been placed on Dewy hill nearby, with better vantage points for defence. However, Ranulf stamped his authority with the latest castle design on the neighbouring village of Bolingbroke, which he restructured.

It is suggested here, therefore, that while Ranulf's motives are not clear, his castles played a key role in 'empire building' and were thus structures full of symbolism, designed to represent him as a strong and powerful man; a man who was master of all he surveyed and whose wealth knew no bounds.

Castle Design

Although Allen Brown cites Beeston and Bolingbroke as the way forward in castle design in the early thirteenth century, (see Chapter 3), McNeill states that it is in four castles of the 1220's that we can see what was to become the ideal in England, the additional two being at Kenilworth and Montgomery. [65] Kenilworth is, in fact, a castle dating back to about fifty years after the Conquest, and it is presumed that McNeill refers to later building or rebuilding. Notably, however, Montgomery dates to 1223 and was built by a newly crowned Henry III. Although slightly earlier than Ranulf's castles, with Ranulf's recently gained influence from the Holy Land, it is tempting to suggest that Henry was inspired by Ranulf's plans. However, the coincidence is interesting, particular in view of current speculation as to the men's relationship around this time.

All three castles have the gate leading to a passage, being bound together into a single building, the gatehouse. This design was not instantly copied everywhere; it

was epitomized in Edward I's castles in Wales (see Chapter 3), later in that century, and emulated in later castles such as Dunstanburgh castle, Northumberland (about 1315); Kidwelly, Caemarthonshire (improvements made from 1298); Kildrummy castle, Aberdeenshire (early fourteenth century) and Dundonald castle, Ayrshire (late thirteenth century).

Perhaps a direct impact of Beeston's design and siting, apart from, perhaps, Montgomery, is that of Criccieth castle, which crowns a rocky peninsula overlooking Tremadog bay in northwest Wales. Criccieth was originally a native castle of the Welsh princes. It is believed that the powerful inner ward may well have been built around 1230-40 by Llewelyn ab Ioerwerth (Ranulf's ally from 1218). Most impressive is the twin-towered gatehouse, which has no parallel among any of Llewelyn's other castles, and could well have been copied from Beeston. [66]

Both Sweetman [67] and McNeill [68] believe that Beeston directly influenced the design and siting of Castle Roche, County Louth, Ireland. It is thought to have been built in 1236 by Rohesia de Verdun. Both Beeston and Castle Roche are on inland promontories and both have inner wards, cut off by rock-cut ditches, of equivalent shape and area. The gatehouse, curtain wall and its towers are similar. However, despite allowing for the fact that Beeston was not completed, Castle Roche has a great hall and chambers integrated into the gatehouse, and is evidently more domestic than military.

Summary

Ranulf de Blundeville's power impacted that large proportion of the medieval English landscape, which he controlled, to such an extent that evidence embodying that power remains to this day. Beeston Castle is indicative of that power, but is only part of it. It is only by placing Beeston Castle within the broader picture, therefore, that this powerful focus can hope to be understood.

Figure 32. Surviving evidence concerning the distribution of Ranulf de Blundeville's vast holdings is incomplete. However, the above map indicates in which counties he held land during his earldom of Cheshire and for which Ranulf received fees.

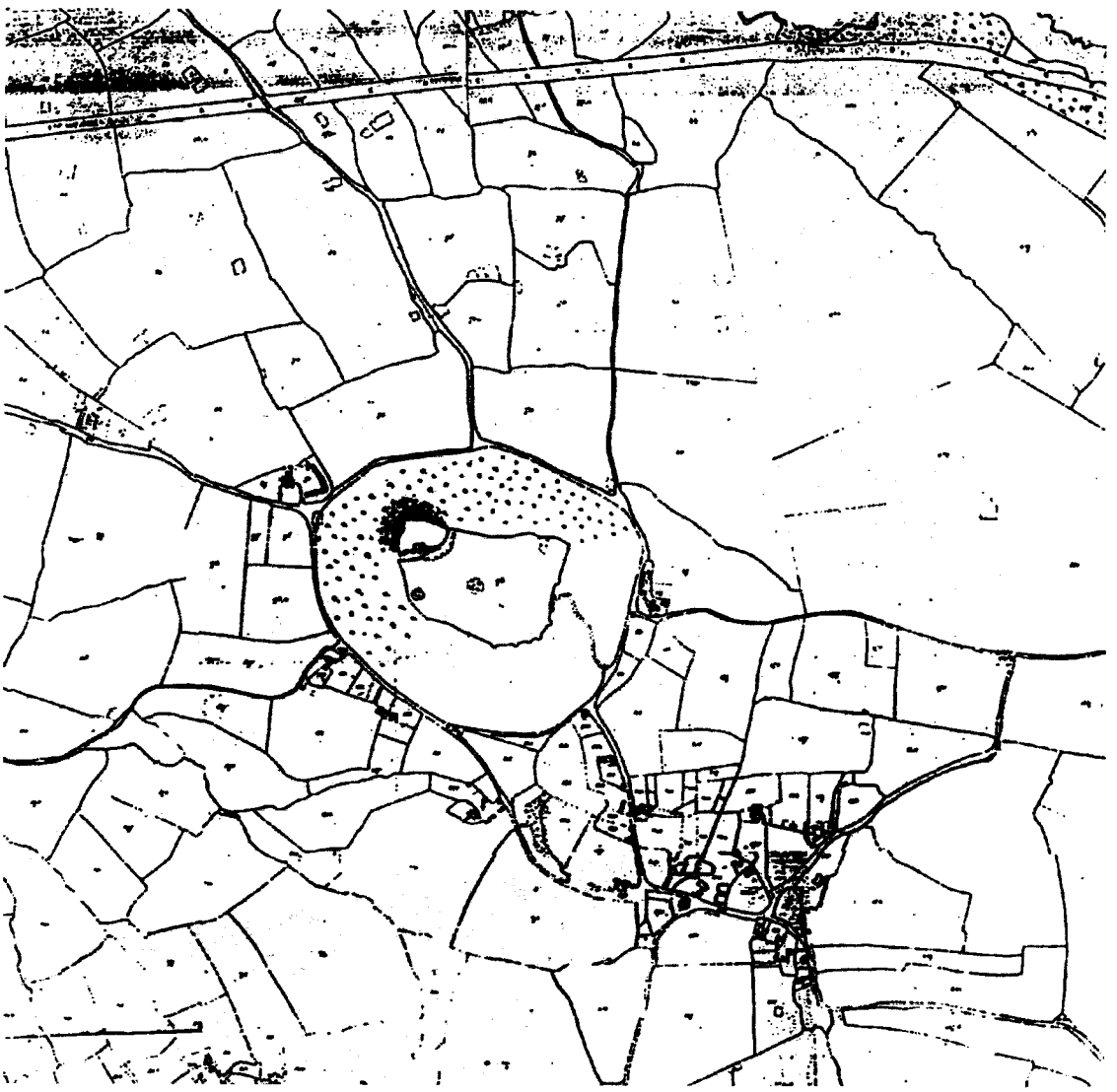

Figure 33. Section of scaled-down Township of Beeston Tithe Map 1846, showing Beeston Castle and village. (Reference DTW/2343/A/1).

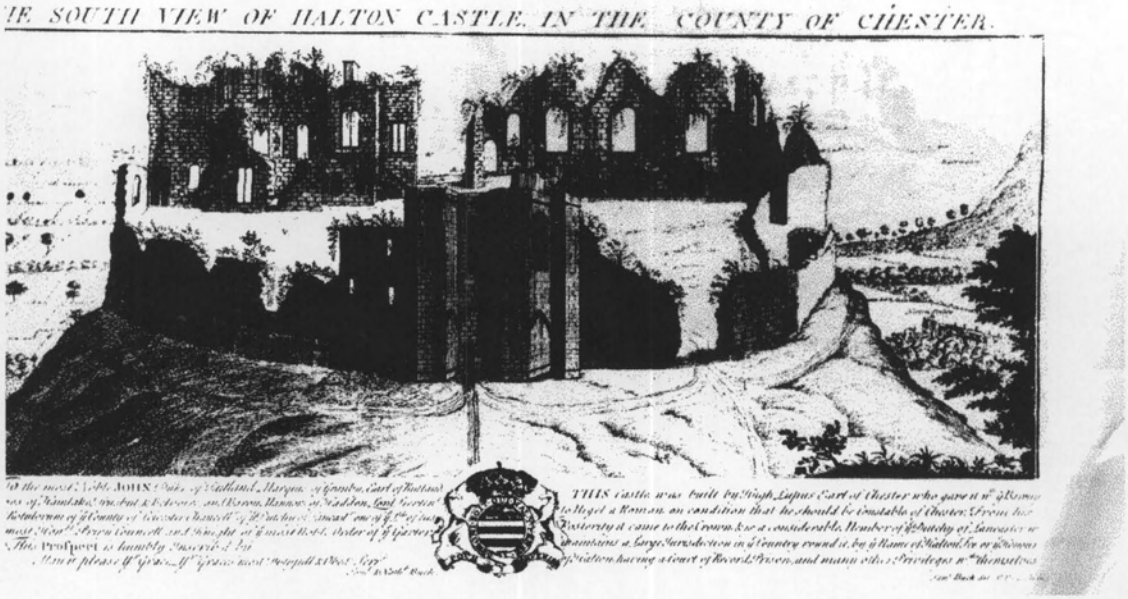

Figure 34. Copy of an engraving of the south view of Halton Castle in the County of Chester by the Buck Brothers, 1727. Taken from McNeil, *North West Archaeological Trust Report No.1* (1987).

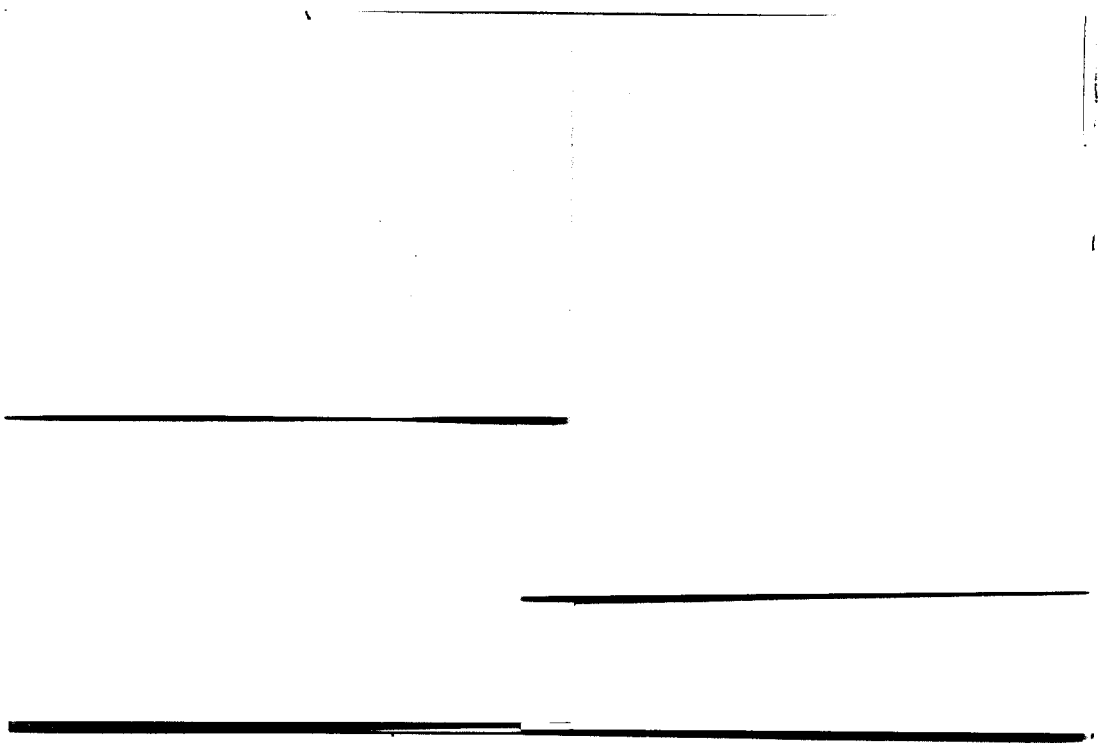

Figure 35. Medieval Cheshire and northeast Wales, showing major, baronial and minor strongholds as well as religious houses. Taken from Sylvester, *A History of Cheshire* (1980).

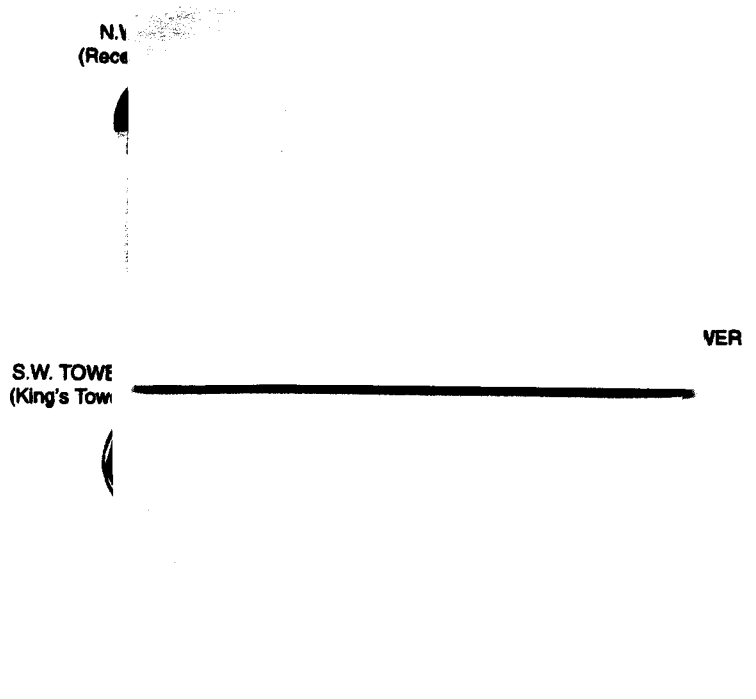

Figure 36. Plan of Bolingbroke Castle. Taken from Cooper, *English Heritage. Bolingbroke Castle. Information for Teachers* (1999).

Figure 37. Interpretative drawing of how Bolingbroke Castle gatehouse may have looked in about 1300. Taken from Cooper, English Heritage. Bolingbroke Castle. Information for Teachers (1999).

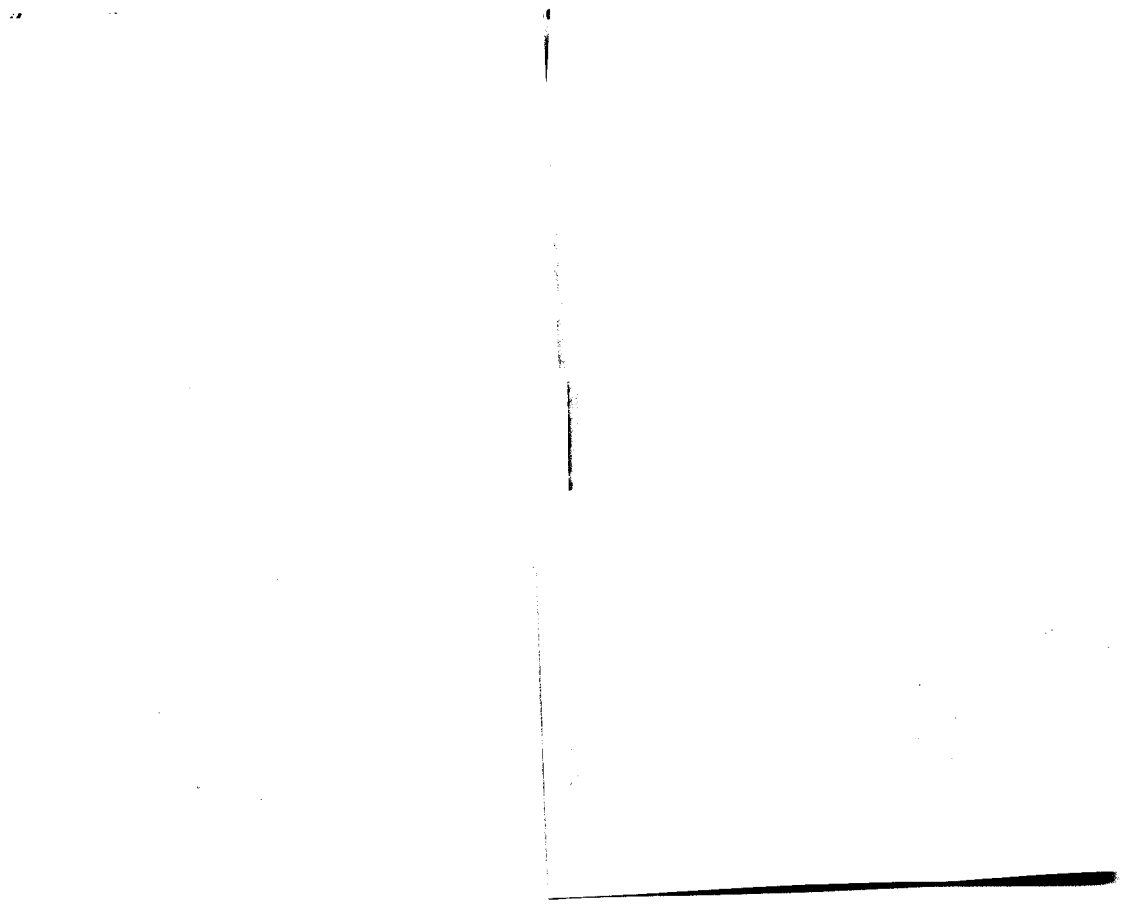

Figure 38. Layout of Bolingbroke Castle site and its relationship with Old Bolingbroke village plan. Taken from Scheduled Monument Record number 22623.

Figure 39. The current remains of Bolingbroke Castle gatehouse.

Figure 40. Bolingbroke Castle: View north from Lookout Tower to Receiver's Tower and Old Bolingbroke village beyond.

Figure 41. Bolingbroke Castle: From the moated area can be seen the Auditor's Tower in the foreground, and in the background, the Kitchen Tower.

Figure 42. Bolingbroke Castle: View east towards the Kitchen Tower. Note the hill in the background. Ranulph deliberately chose the lower ground for his castle.

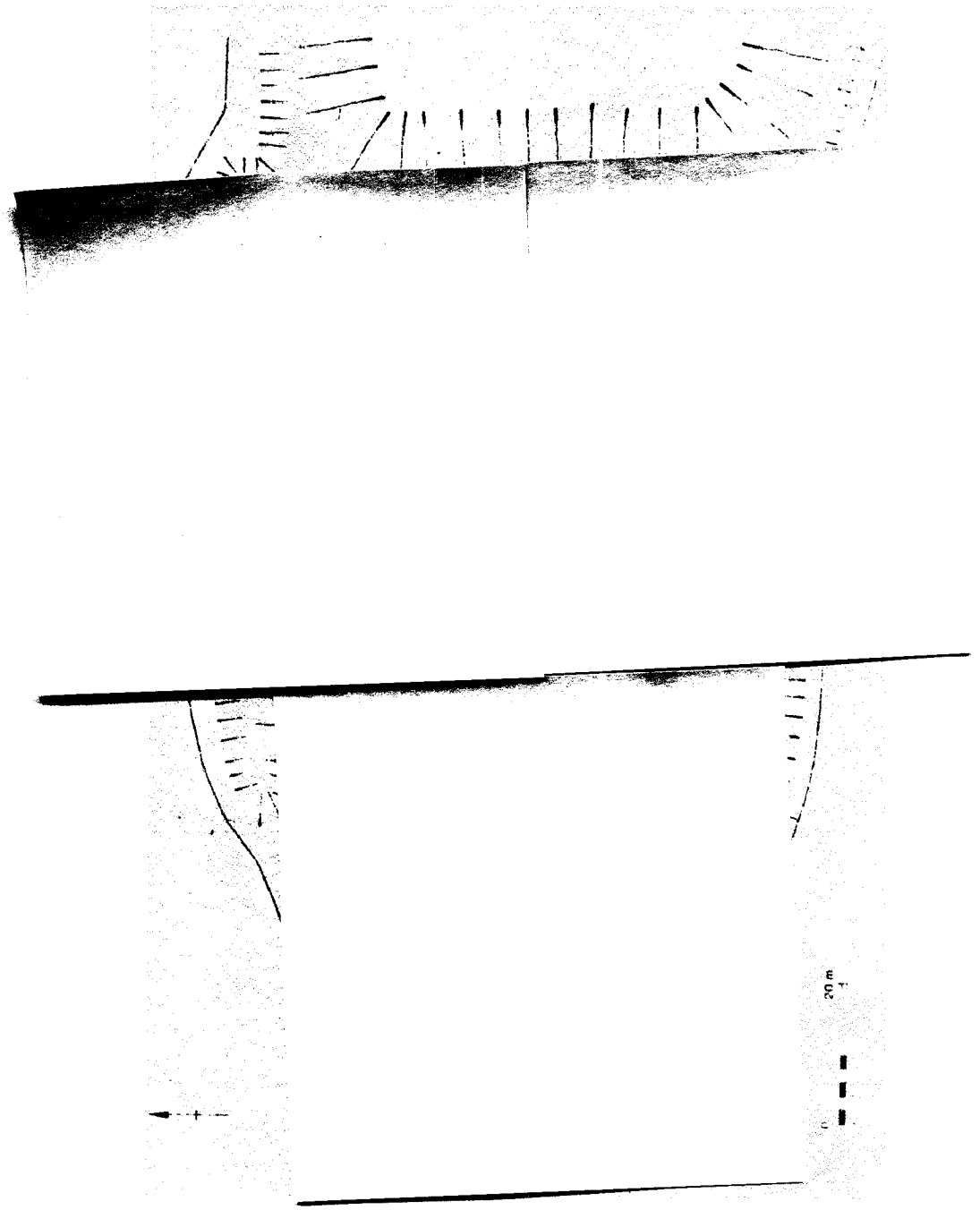

Figure 43. Plan of Chartley Castle. Taken from *Northamptonshire County Council, Chartley Castle, Staffordshire. Archaeological Buildings Recording 1997-98.*

Figure 44. Chartley Castle, Staffordshire, from the A518 Uttoxeter road.

Figure 45. Chartley Castle from the northeast. The outer bailey is discernible in the foreground, with the remains of the gatehouse behind.

Figure 46. Chartley Castle. View to the southwest from the moat. The two towers to the left are believed to resemble those that formed part of the castle's gatehouse.

Figure 47. Chartley Castle: The round keep on the twelfth century motte. The eighteenth and nineteenth century additions to the original thirteenth structure, are clearly visible.

Figure 48. The remains of tower 5 (see Figure 37), which was the right-hand tower of the castle's gatehouse.

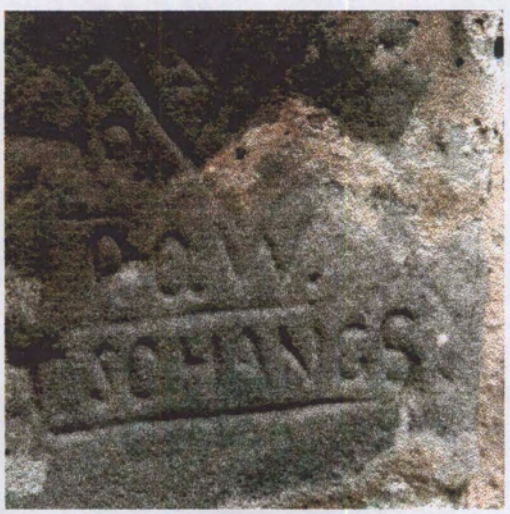

Figure 49. Chartley Castle: In the First World War, Prisoners of War carved their names on the inside walls of the remaining towers.

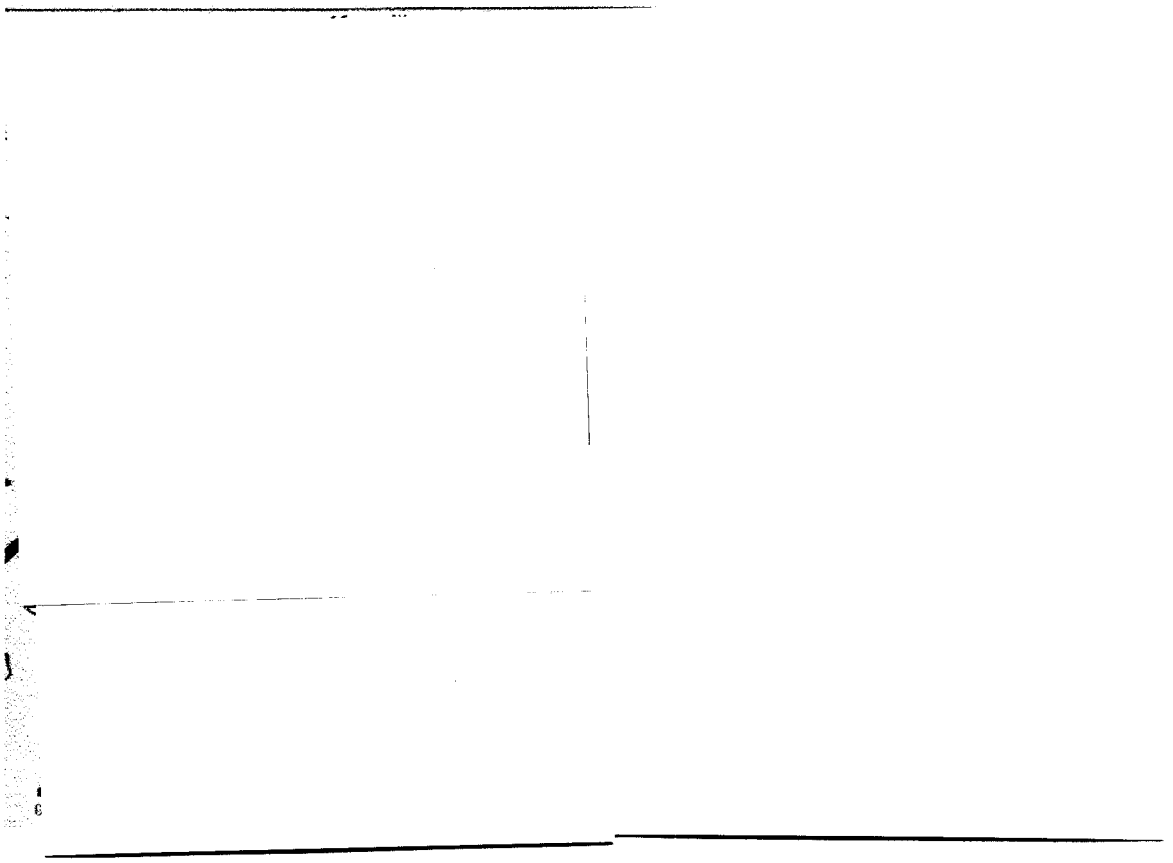

Figure 50. The above map shows the locations of Poulton and Dieulacres Abbeys, as well as other medieval religious houses in the area. Taken from Emery, Gibbins & Matthews, *The Archaeology of an Ecclesiastical Landscape* (1996).

Figure 51. Dieulacres Abbey. Grave-slab of an abbot of Dieulacres, and fragment of window tracery incorporated into Dieulacres Abbey Farm outbuildings. Taken from Fisher, *Dieulacres Abbey* (1989).

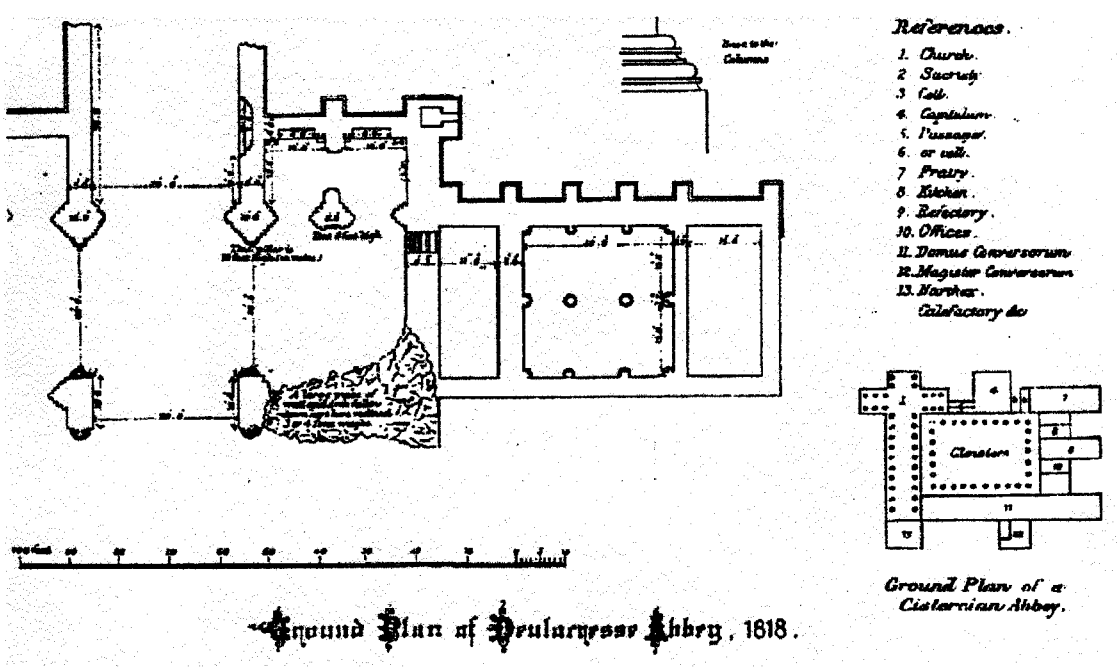

Figure 52. Plan of the surviving parts of Dieulacres Abbey in 1818. Taken from Klemperer, *Dieulacres Abbey. Survey Commissioned by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council* (1995).

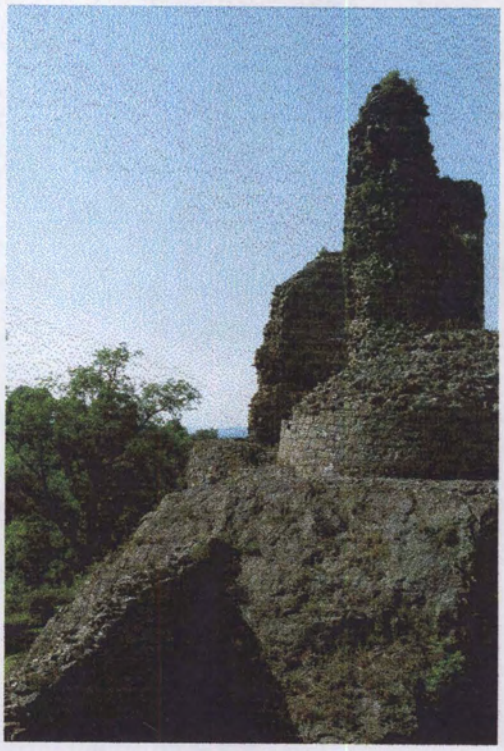

Figure 53. Montgomery Castle, Powys. Henry III built Montgomery Castle early in the thirteenth century to safeguard the route into Wales, a route which followed an old Roman road.

Figure 54. Dunstanburgh Castle, Northumberland. The great gatehouse was built in the 1380's.

Figure 55. The fourteenth century great gatehouse at Kidwelly Castle, Dyfed.

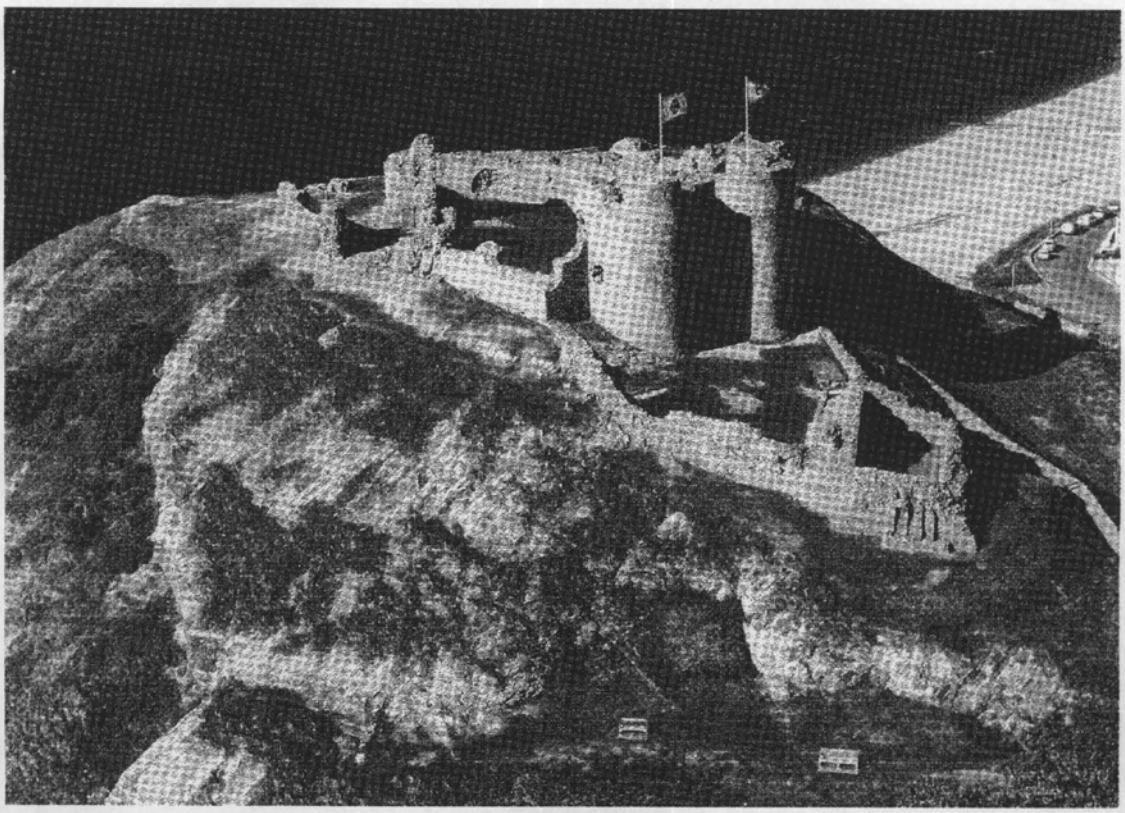

Figure 56. Criccieth Castle, Gwynedd. The twin-towered gatehouse has no parallel among any of Llywelyn's other castles and was perhaps copied from a contemporary construction at Beeston Castle.

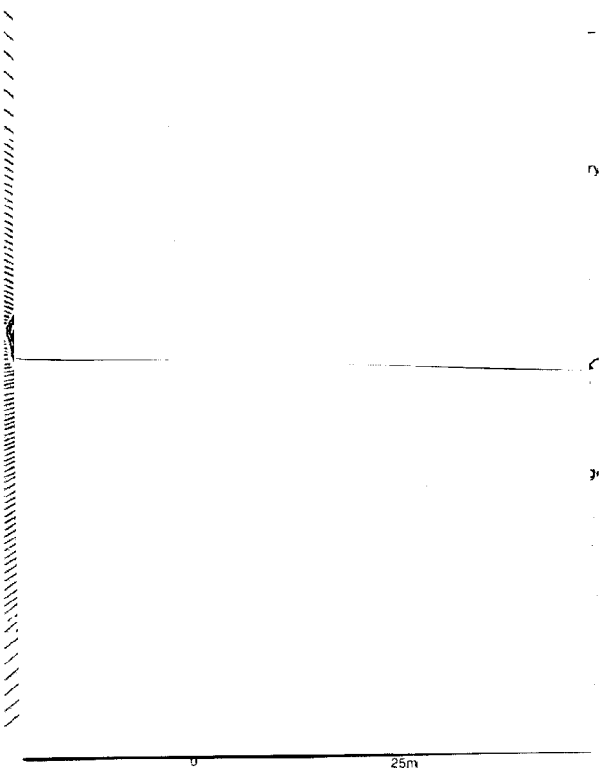

Figure 57. Plan of Castle Roche, Co. Louth, Ireland. Taken from Sweetman, *The Medieval Castles of Ireland* (2000).

Figure 58. The twin-towered gatehouse at Castle Roche. Taken from Sweetman, *The Medieval Castles of Ireland* (2000).

References

Chapter 4

1. Emerick, 'Sir Charles Peers and After', Arnold, Davies, Ditchfield (eds.), *History and Heritage,* p.188.
2. Alexander, *Ranulf of Chester,* p. ix.
3. (G. Barraclough, quoted in) Ellis (ed.), *Book of Excavations*, p.94.
4. Thacker (ed.), 'The Earldom of Chester', *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society*, p.11.
5. T. Williamson, L. Bellamy, *Property and the Landscape – A Social History of the Land Ownership and the English Countryside* (Frome and London, 1987), p.36.
6. We know, for instance, that Beeston village existed at the time of Domesday Book (1086), and the castle undoubtedly had a profound effect on its community, and perhaps also its settlement and field patterns. Indeed, we know that the building of Peckforton Castle on neighbouring Horsley Hill, had much to do with the change of field patterns on the lower slopes of the hill in the mid nineteenth century. P. Thompson, L. McKenna, J. Mackillop, *Ploughlands and Pastures. The Imprint of Agrarian History in Four Cheshire Townships – Peckforton, Haughton, Bunbury, Huxley* (Chester, 1982), p.18.

   In addition, Liddiard highlights the relative new-comer of landscape archaeology as a discipline connected with the study of castles and their siting in R. Liddiard, 'Castle Rising, Norfolk: A "Landscape of Lordship"?', C. Harper-Bill (ed.), *Anglo-Norman Studies. XII. Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1999* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 169-186.

7. Husain, *Cheshire Under the Norman Earls*, p.72.
8. M. Aston, *Monasteries*, (London, 1993), p.120.
9. Barraclough (ed.), *The Charters of the Anglo-Norman Earls,* p.415.
10. *Ibid.,* p.418.
11. *Ibid.,* p.418.
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13. *Ibid.,* p.31.

14. R.A. Allen Brown, B. Prestwich, C. Coulson, *Castles. A History and Guide*, (London, 1980), pp. 53-54.
15. D. Lysons (Rev.), Magna Britannia, Vol. II, Part II. Containing the County Palatine of Chester (London, 1810), p.745.
16. Aston, *Monasteries*, p.88.
17. P.W. Cullen, R. Hordern, *The Castles of Cheshire* (Chorley, 1986), p.4.
18. R. Allen Brown, 'A List of Castles 1154-1216', *English History Review 74* (1959), pp. 249-80.
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22. T. McNeill, *Castles* (An English Heritage publication, London, 1992), p.84.
23. G. Holles, *Lincolnshire Notes, 1634-42,* p.125.
24. National Monument Reference: *Monument: Bolingbroke Castle, Bolingbroke. National Monument Number: 22623* (Revised June 1994).
25. *Ibid.,* (Revised June 1994).
26. P. Cooper, *Bolingbroke Castle. Information for Teachers* (An English Heritage publication, 1999), p.1.
27. *Ibid.,* p.1.
28. M. W. Thompson, The Rise of the Castle (Cambridge, 1991), p.104.
29. Northamptonshire County Council, *Chartley Castle, Staffordshire. Archaeological Buildings Recording, 1997-8* (Northampton, 1998), p.28.
30. D. Wilkinson, *Chartley Castle Walkpast*, (Leaflet, Stafford, 1998), p.4.
31. Northamptonshire County Council, *Chartley Castle*, p.12.
32. J. Leland, *The Laboryouse Search for Antiquitees IV, 1549*, p.24.
33. Alexander, *Ranulf of Chester*, p.39.
34. J.P. Greene, *Medieval Monasteries* (Leicester, 1992), p.171.
35. W.B. Stephens (ed.), *History of the County of Warwick. Vol. 8. The City of Coventry and Borough of Warwick* (London, 1969), pp. 131-132.
36. *Ibid.,* p.131.
37. *Ibid.,* p.131.
38. Lysons, *Magna Britannia, Vol. II,* p.754.

39. *Ibid.*, p.754.

40. M.W. Thompson, 'Assorted Castles and Monasteries in the Middle Ages. A Tentative List', *Archaeological Journal, Vol. 143,* (1986), p.307.

41. Alexander, *Ranulf of Chester*, p.39.

42. Alexander, *Ranulf of Chester*, p.39:

The Annals of Dieulacres Abbey (Primary Source: Cheshire 52(1957): 17-27) ascribe Ranulf's motives in establishing the abbey to a dream in which his grandfather, Ranulf II, appeared to him and told him to go to the parish of Leek (Staffs), where the earl was 'to establish a Cistercian abbey on the site of a church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. He was to restore the church building and increase the possessions of the monks of Poulton, there to be translated, and the house would be adorned by a ladder of angelic prayer as well as work towards the salvation both of Ranulf II and of the dreamer (...) upon relation (of this dream) to his wife next morning, she exclaimed "Deu encres" or God increase the pious resolve of her Lord'.

43. M.M. Emery, D.J. L. Gibbins and K.J. Matthews, *The Archaeology of an Ecclesiastical Landscape. Chapel House Farm, Poulton (Cheshire) 1995* (Chester, 1996), p.8.

44. W.D. Klemperer, *Dieulacres Abbey, Leek. Stoke-on-Trent City Museum Archaeology Unit in Liaison with Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd., and History of Art Dept., Warwick University. Survey Commissioned by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. City Museum Archaeology Unit. Report No. 46* (Stoke-on-Trent, 1995), p.2.

45. *Ibid.*, p.2

46. M.J. Fisher, *Dieulacres Abbey*, (private publication, 1984), p.30.

47. *Ibid.*, p.24.

48. Klemperer, *Dieulacres Abbey*, p.97.

49. Fisher, *Dieulacres Abbey*, p.28.

50. Klemperer, *Dieulacres Abbey,* p.2.

51. Alexander, *Ranulf of Chester,* p.93.

52. R.K. Dent, J. Hill, *Historic Staffordshire*, (Wakefield, 1896), p.78.

53. Conversation with Keith Matthews, (Senior Archaeologist and co-author of *The Archaeology of an Ecclesiastical Landscape. Chapel House Farm, Poulton (Cheshire) 1995,* (see reference 43, above), July 2000), in which it was confirmed that there is a discrepancy and, therefore, as to the dates of translation, based on primary sources available.
54. Beal-Browell, *Dictionary of National Biography. Vol. II* (London, 1908), p.731.
55. Alexander, *Ranulf of Chester*, p.87.
56. *Ibid.*, p.93.
57. *Ibid.*, p.93.
58. *Ibid.*, p.11.
59. *Ibid.*, p.92.
60. Thacker (ed.), 'The Earldom of Chester', *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society*, p.18.
61. *Ibid.*, p.16.
62. *Ibid.*, p.16.
63. Allen Brown, 'A List of Castles', *English History Review 74,* pp.249-80.

    According to Allen Brown, in 1154, he estimates that around 225 baronial castles in England and 49 royal castles existed. By December 1214, 93 royal castles and 179 baronial castles existed.

64. Thompson, *The Rise of the Castle*, p.104.
65. T. McNeill, *Castles*, p.98.
66. D.M. Robinson, R.S. Thomas, *Wales. Castles and Historic Places* (A Cadw publication, Cardiff, 1990), p.69.
67. D. Sweetman, *The Medieval Castles of Ireland* (Cork, Ireland, 1999), pp.57-8.
68. T. McNeill, *Castles*, p.98.

CHAPTER 5

Analysis of Interpretation and Presentation at Beeston Castle

A descendant of the Department of Environment, English Heritage took over the guardianship of Beeston Castle's fee-paying site and its exhibition housed in the Outer Gatehouse, in 1984. English Heritage did not, therefore, commence with a 'clean slate' and this factor has influenced the site's interpretation and presentation. Beeston falls within English Heritage's North West region, which covers Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside. With the exception of Chester Castle, about twelve miles away, Beeston stands very much isolated within a region relatively devoid of ancient monuments and historic buildings. Its consequent isolation from other English Heritage sites within this allocated region equally emphasizes Beeston's relative geographical isolation above the Cheshire Plain. Clearly already having to fight its corner, Beeston Castle's interpretation and presentation is subject also to other issues facing English Heritage:

> Of course one appreciates the difficulties of the organization: its brief is not just to look after a fair chunk of the perceived manmade heritage in the English landscape but also to promote enjoyment of it, increase the number of visitors to it and then cash crop from them, and to utilize as an educational resource more effectively than hitherto the splendid heritage it inherited from the Department of Environment. [1]

In the absence of formal evaluation of Beeston's exhibition, and accepting that the beholder's 'interpretation is always (...) immediately critical of other interpretations' [2], interpretation and presentation is discussed in respect of Beeston Castle's perceived significance, continuity and totality.

The Site

The Picturesque, Romantic, Revivalist, Morris and the Arts and Crafts movements, as well as archaeology, have all played their part and all exist today in influencing

attitudes towards ruins. [3] It is our psychological response, our highly complex reaction, which gives ruins power and meaning. To maximise the sense of communion with the past, a ruin must be viewed entirely alone among the crumbling stones, listening to the whispering walls. The ruin, a link in our lifeline, feeds our dreams and challenges our senses, creating within us a tension between what we see and what we may know.

Unusually devoid of interpretation panels, Beeston Castle's power appears frozen in the very process of dissolving. It is a ruin that almost escapes modern intervention, where any interpretation may be seen as a barrier. It is a ruin 'performing its function as a reminder, a monument in truth.' [4] This happy situation, however, has arisen not out of intention, but out of wanton acts of vandalism, destroying the few interpretative panels once available. [5] This destructive situation can be likened to that experienced at Bolingbroke Castle, a free entry site. Here, a combined effort between English Heritage and the Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire has produced interpretative panels (see Figure 39), to educate the visitor where a guidebook or exhibition is not available. Although highly informative at such a place as Bolingbroke [6], interpretative panels, where vandals have chosen to ignore them, are by their nature, intrusive. Indeed, Diment, somewhat disparagingly queries their effective usage:

> Why are we cluttering up our countryside and heritage sites with boring panels that nobody wants to read, written by experts for experts, detracting from the very place we may be seeking to raise an appreciation of in the minds of our visitors? (...) Can we change visitor behaviour and attitudes? Can we make a difference? Not with a boring panel. [7]

What can make a difference? Interpretation planned for Beeston's site, and which is currently on the Custodian and Marketing Manager's drawing board, is a free one-page leaflet. [8] On one side will be details of natural history that can be enjoyed as the visitor wends his way up to the heart of the site, and on the other, details of which views and counties can be seen from the Inner Bailey. This clearly takes an

unobtrusive yet wider interpretative approach. In the longer term, as with all its sites [9], English Heritage intends to introduce audio-guides. [10] While these appear to be well-received by the public [11], there will be a real danger of,

> Encounter(ing) a room full of visitors gazing in eerie silence at the remnants of medieval life – and realis(ing) that they are rapt, not in contemplation of what is before them, but in listening through their headphones to the voice of their audio-guide-from-history. [12]

Currently, it is only in Beeston's 'most dramatic use of concrete (of) the sectional bridge (...) that rises in a parabolic curve to the gate of the inner ward' [13], where we are hauled back, rudely but temporarily, into the present. [14]

Direct comparisons can be made between Beeston and Castell Dinas Brân, Llangollen, North Wales, in terms of both siting and site interpretation. Dinas Brân is also an ancient and almost impregnable stronghold and was probably built just before 1270 by Prince Madog. [15] The site equally made use of the precipitous natural defences, as well as the leftovers of an original Iron Age hillfort on the site. Although the Welsh did not appear keen to relinquish the keep, as can be seen at Dinas Brân (see Figure 61), two long and narrow towers, not dissimilar from Beeston's gateway, flanked the vaulted passage of the entrance. At Dinas Brân, however, as well as at the privately owned Chartley Castle site [16], only our imaginations can supply any answers, there being no interpretation. Despite the absence of site interpretation, that tension between what we see and what we know at Beeston Castle, as well as the ability to change our attitudes and behaviour, can be influenced by the site exhibition and presence of English Heritage staff.

Baker claims that, 'In taking a carefully calculated and sensitive but light-handed approach to interpretation, many visitors are helped on personal explorations of the place and its individuality, without being pressured to understand certain things in certain ways – surely the way many visitors take their pleasure in ruins.' [17] To what

extent Beeston's exhibition provides the tools for the visitor's own interpretation, thus provoking the imagination and increasing knowledge, is to be examined.

Continuity

It has been acknowledged that the site at Beeston Castle is a palimpsest resulting from the process of continuity and the thread of power woven through it. The current site exhibition was launched in 1997. It takes a chronological approach, erring on the didactic [18], commencing in the first of three main areas, with the geology of the site and 'The First People' [19]. Here, within a tower of Lord Tollemache's 1846 Outer Gatehouse, five display panels are dedicated to the prehistoric site at Beeston. In the second area, effectively a corridor between two tower areas, three smaller panels concentrate on the medieval period. One concerns Ranulf de Blundeville as founder of the castle; another, Edward I Castles and the third facing the first two, discusses medieval excavated finds. There is no apology for the leap over millennia between the two areas. The intriguing concept of Ranulf's power, indicated by his possible desire for legitimacy through continuity in choosing the hillfort site, is thus by-passed. Indeed, the importance of the medieval period, of which Beeston Castle is itself the most poignant reminder to today's visitor, is barely acknowledged as we sweep through the corridor, drawn by the third and final part of the exhibition in the second tower area.

Having been side-stepped to later medieval Edward I castles and Beeston's likely influence on their design, about three hundred and fifty years are voided as the largest part of the exhibition is entered. The exhibition's limited variety of presentational media is largely reserved for this area dedicated to Beeston's 1645-6 Civil War siege. Its dominance in terms of area and use of media, is possibly due to the combined result of the relative prolificacy of primary source material; abundance of relevant material finds and the public's morbid interest, although it would be misdirected here, in warfare (see Appendix 2). However, the extent to which the starvation experience of Beeston's Civil War siege is imparted, following a visit to this area of the exhibition is dubious, as today's visitor unwraps his sandwiches and

contemplates the silhouette of Beeston's gatehouse rising above the Cheshire Plain, framing Peckforton Castle in the distance.

Life-sized and brightly-painted 'cardboard cut-outs' of Royalists and Parliamentarians adorn the walls between panels, and stand facing the visitor as he enters the area. These large, vivid exhibit elements, although not explained, have become landmarks. As they are drawn to them, it is clear that 'visitors cherry-pick for emotional engagement as they wander through displays of twentieth century history. Curators can put together timelines and sequential displays in every showcase and all exhibitions, but visitors are not interested in chronological strait jackets.' [20] It is in this area that a rotational, rather than permanent display is potentially envisaged, with more objects and hands-on displays being made available. [21] Clearly, in terms of site importance, however, there is a danger of over-emphasis, here.

A concise summary of Beeston's two hundred and fifty year history from the end of the Civil War to 1902 ensues on the final, small panel tagged on to this last area. In skimming over those eighteenth century visitors such as Barrett and Ibbetson who were artistically inspired by Beeston's ruins [22], we are left abruptly at the turn of the last century and the present is clearly not accounted for: Mention is not made of Beeston being passed into guardianship by the Tollemache family in 1959; the site's important excavations of the 1970's and 1980's; English Heritage taking over the site's management in 1984 and current events at the castle such as falconry and Living History exhibitions. Although mention is made that the Outer Gatehouse was built in 1846 by Lord Tollemache to allow access to paying visitors, it is not ultimately clear that the visitor stands within that building which replaced the original medieval Outer Gatehouse. The thread of power, however, subtly reappears in the interpretation team's exhibition presentation. [23]

Three alcoves of Tollemache's Outer Gatehouse lent themselves to these three areas of concentration [24]. The problem of space was a major concern in the exhibition design [25], the significant area for the adjacent shop having been

demarcated beforehand [26], as well as the unusual shape within the Gatehouse. Studies have shown, however, that in exhibition halls with fewer elements, visitors tend to use a higher proportion of what is available. [27] Using aesthetically pleasing, though perhaps stimulatingly-absent, monochrome-printed display panels interspersed with pictures throughout, suggests a continuity throughout the exhibition, which is clearly lacking. Despite the arguably straitjacketed chronological approach taken, the uninterpreted voids result in the loss of the power thread, resulting in a 'disconnectedness (which) may artificially generate dispersive, disintegrated, and centrifugal habits' [28], where totality is not, therefore, achieved.

Totality

In landscape terms, the geography panel places the prime motive for the siting of Beeston as inaccessibility and, therefore, defence. Although the ability to see for miles is defensively important, equally important, however, is that the castle can be seen from miles away, this being vital for both offensive and prestige reasons. While we are informed that the surrounding landscape would have provided most of the prehistoric settlement's needs, the effect of the castle on the later medieval landscape and society, is ignored.

The significance of material finds from the hillfort at Beeston in relation to the Cheshire area is not approached, although panels such as that entitled 'Everyday Lives', refers to a wider social context. Equally, Ranulf's importance in medieval social circles is outlined, yet his immense power in the landscape almost evades us: We are not aware of the extent of his landholdings, nor of Bolingbroke and Chartley castles, built at the same time. It is noted, however, that Beeston and Chartley Castles, as well as Dieulacres Abbey, are mentioned in Bolingbroke Castle's interpretation. [29]

While Edward I castles are likely to have been influenced by Beeston's design and are, no doubt, more immediately familiar to the visitor, the exhibition does not place Beeston in context within Cheshire, nor indeed, with Marcher and Welsh native

castles, although the castle's archaeological report acknowledges this relationship.[30] That Chester Castle was Ranulf's main seat, leaves an unanswered question as to why Ranulf felt the need to build Beeston Castle. Chester Castle is not referred to in the exhibition, although we are aware that Ranulf based himself at Chester. Neither are we aware that English Heritage opens Chester Castle to the public. By comparison, current National Trust presentation at Tattershall Castle, Lincolnshire refers to Bolingbroke Castle, its close neighbour, in terms of similarities in their early designs, therefore attempting to place Tattershall in context locally. [31] English Heritage promotes the group value of sites such as at Hadrian's Wall. While English Heritage has not yet entered into a conservational partnership with another outside body, such as is the case at Bolingbroke (see Chapter 2), perhaps an appreciation of the group value of sites on a more local level would assist in the process of educating to achieve a fuller understanding of Beeston Castle, and thus engender a desire to conserve.

While the exhibition largely succeeds in isolating Beeston from its context, English Heritage does take the view that 'there is much that can be learnt from the natural world that improves our understanding of the historic environment, whether this is in terms of whole landscapes or of individual sites'. [32] It is Beeston's natural world that receives the greater emphasis in terms of totality in interpretation. However, site-specific interpretation, although probably using the concept of place to powerful effect, perhaps engenders a 'local pride (...) rather than a key to understanding a wider past'. [33]

The concept of totality can be stretched to incorporate that of social integration and the past being accessible to all. Despite the site's inherited concrete bridge to the Inner Ward being a challenge to even the more able-bodied, English Heritage claim its 1997 exhibition was designed to appeal to all its visitors. [34] The only official exhibition policies in Britain, and which are adhered to at Beeston [35], are those acknowledging the guidelines on customer care (1993), disability (1992) and the use of non-sexist language. [36] In terms of accessibility, of the three models on display, all are at a height suitable for wheelchair users or children, and two of these

are cast in metal and were designed specifically for visually impaired visitors. [37] (See Figures 12 and 14).

The panels' text has been pitched to an educated thirteen-year-old [38], and while this does not appear to be an issue, the verbosity does. [39] The exhibition does not appear to have been designed for the general visitor who comes for an average concentration span of fifteen to twenty minutes' recreational experience, and not for educational or moral uplift. [40] Exhibition audiences are composed of unrelated social units who remain anonymous and display uneven previous knowledge about the subject matter. Equally, 'learning is multidimensional: it is not limited to the acquisition of information (...) but also involves the development of attitudes, skills and values'. [41]

To motivate these audiences, therefore, more use perhaps needs to be made of the different experiences of child and parent, and elements of play and interactive techniques need to be introduced using an appropriate mix of modality, such as reading, listening, watching and touching. While increasing the satisfaction of one client group could reduce the satisfaction of another, efforts are, however, being made to appeal to all, with Archaeological Open Days at the site [42]; the desire to involve the local community in order to raise awareness [43], and an illustrated folder is planned for those not able to access Beeston Castle itself. [44]

Significance

We are aware of Beeston's significance, only in terms of the three periods considered in the exhibition and this significance, as we have seen, is somewhat divorced from its context. As a result, we are not widely conscious, for example, of Ranulf's actual or pervading power and thus the castle's possible purpose. Although the plan of the castle is summarized, it is not put into context within the general history of castle building since the Norman Conquest, and we are only told that, 'Unusually it did not contain buildings associated with a thriving castle: a keep, great hall, or kitchen'. [45] It is not suggested that the external appearance of the

castle was perhaps Ranulf's priority for what could have been, principally, a 'show' castle. Neither does it make clear that the lack of a keep is one of the features of Ranulf's castle and not due to a design fault or to the castle's incompletion. Indeed, it was the previous exhibition that highlighted the possible role of the castle, being a private fortress, residence and symbol of Ranulf's power and status, and not the current exhibition, which describes Ranulf's groundbreaking double-gateway in terms of defence, only.

Objects

The interpretation is seen to be predominantly site-based as opposed to contextual. It is also clearly object-based. [46] Apart from the difficulties of space for a chronological display, the imbalances experienced and outlined above, must be due equally to the availability of objects excavated: The majority of material finds are post-medieval, with the medieval period providing the least finds. [47] This would largely explain why there are no objects on display for the medieval period, although there are a number for the other two periods addressed. We are not, however, made aware of the reasons for this omission. There are a small number of medieval coins and iron objects such as knives and dress fittings [48] that could be incorporated into the exhibition. Morrison, Regional Senior Curator, is keen to have more objects on display at Beeston as he has succeeded in doing so for both the recent Rievaulx Abbey and Richmond Castle exhibitions. [49] Beeston exhibition is indicative, perhaps, of 'balancing the needs of the visitor against the interests of the scholar. As more space has been given over to interpretation, less is made available for objects'. [50]

Compared to Beeston's previous exhibition, the labelled objects displayed are placed alongside or within the appropriate display panels in an effort to contextualize them. The somewhat didactic approach of labels and panels largely fails, however, to provoke and stimulate. The importance of the axeheads within a Cheshire context, for instance, is not highlighted. A different approach at Richmond, in particular, is adopted, where questions are put to the visitor, and a conclusive

interpretation is not always given. Parker Pearson emphasizes the importance of this approach:

> An unidentified iron object in Scunthorpe Museum, labelled 'We don't know what it is either', is not an admission of failure but an invitation to participate. If the public are invited to contribute and learn about the difficulties of interpretation, they will share an involvement rather than remain excluded and passive onlookers. [51]

Education and Entertainment

Beeston exhibition cannot be accused of biasing its interpretation and presentation towards the National Curriculum, compared, perhaps with that at Rievaulx Abbey, despite school parties being most prominent amongst their visitors. [52] To adopt such a bias, could possibly isolate the site in terms of interpretation and presentation even more so than at present. As Rumble, English Heritage, states, 'the educational element is one which should run through all our interpretation, whether aimed at the young, the teenager or the adult'. [53]

While the use of heuristic methods, allowing people to learn things for themselves, is difficult because adults expect straight answers to straight questions, Durban suggests that 'multi sensory exhibition experiences that offer many entry points could facilitate a range of learning experiences, without prejudice'. [54] This advocates the hands-on approach, not seriously considered by Beeston's 1997 exhibition team [55], which is, debatably, empowering, stimulating and fun; explains the lone wooden, finger-worn castle gateway model at Beeston exhibition (Figure 18), and suggests an avoidance of the existing more formal impersonal academic register which appeals to the 'highbrow'. [56] Perhaps Rumble's (English Heritage) call for minimal conceptual orientation of the visitor (see Chapter 1), can be achieved as well as represent a whole rather than a part, via taxonomic displays such as those, perhaps, at Richmond. These displays focus on the emotional or affective response

to the demonstration of a concept. [57] Clearly, however, an over-concentration on the medium at the expense of the message, is also to be avoided.

In the quest for commercial success and providing 'value-for-money', research shows that attractions that appeal to families and which combine both education and entertainment, are the most likely to be successful in attracting visitors. [58] Beeston's recently successful (and historically inappropriate) Viking Living History day [59], could be said to have represented 'the worst aspects of "edutainment", "fakelore" and the blurring of boundaries between historical credibility and the appeal to public nostalgia'. [60] There is equally no doubt that Living History at Beeston Castle is a crowd-puller, thus introducing the site to people who might not approach it otherwise. Heritage has indeed shifted from passive entertainment to participation, as the public demands more than undigested facts. Crucially, English Heritage investment in the site, hinges directly on visitor numbers and those signing up for English Heritage membership. [61] Beeston's exhibition team had to work with a very tight budget, directly connected to 'numbers through the door'. [62]

Summary

English Heritage's hands were tied in terms of finance and space to interpret and present Beeston's past. However, despite the difficulties, the visitor perhaps experiences 'a fading sense of continuity and change, which is being replaced by a fragmented and piecemeal idea of the past'. [63] We need information to understand what we are seeing and experiencing at the relatively interpretation-free site at Beeston. However, the process of presenting that information appears to distance an already isolated site by not placing it in its context, thus 'distorting and over-simplifying the historical truth of the very thing that it is intended to enhance'. [64] What should be a provocative and stimulating experience to complement a visit to the castle, arguably becomes an imaginative straitjacket where the tools to unlock the visitor's imagination are limited by lack of media.

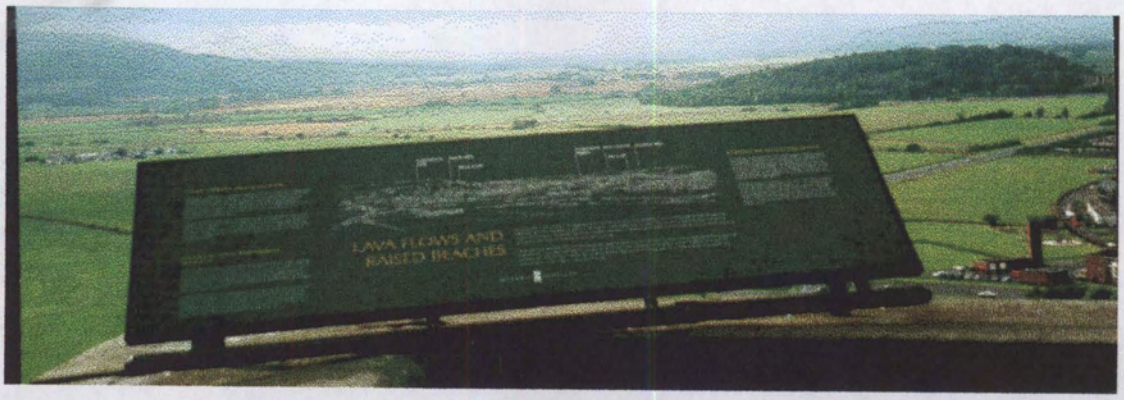

Figure 59. Information panels such as these can be found around Stirling Castle's site, providing information about the local geography and natural world. At Beeston Castle, English Heritage is to take an arguably less intrusive approach.

Figure 60. English Heritage has an award-winning exhibition (1996) at Etal Castle, Northumberland. The innovative exhibition relies almost entirely on audio-guides using minimal text in an attempt to bring border warfare alive.

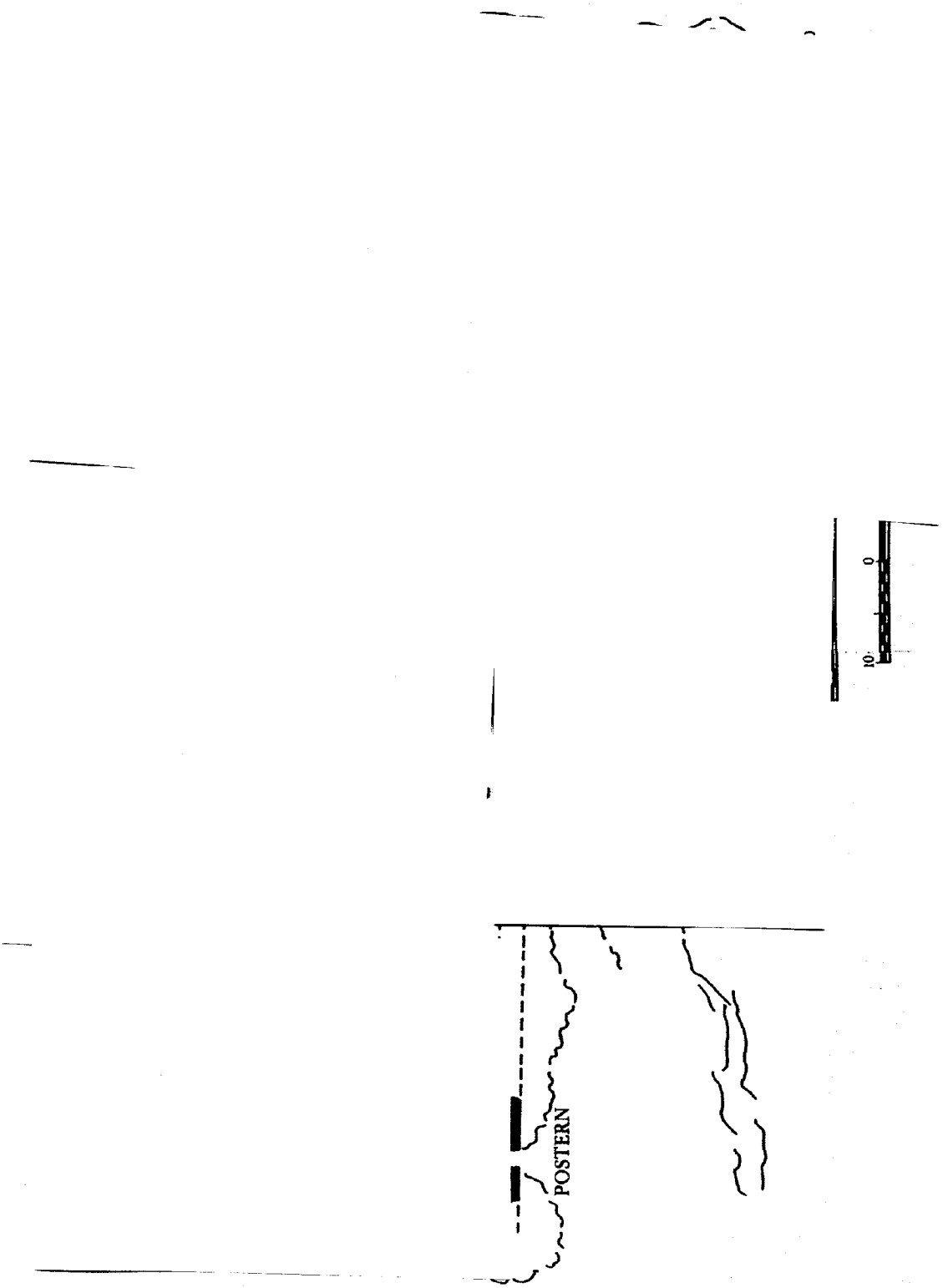

Figure 61. Plan of Castell Dinas Brân, Llangollen. Taken from a leaflet by the same name (undated and no longer in print) produced by Clwyd Archaeology Service.

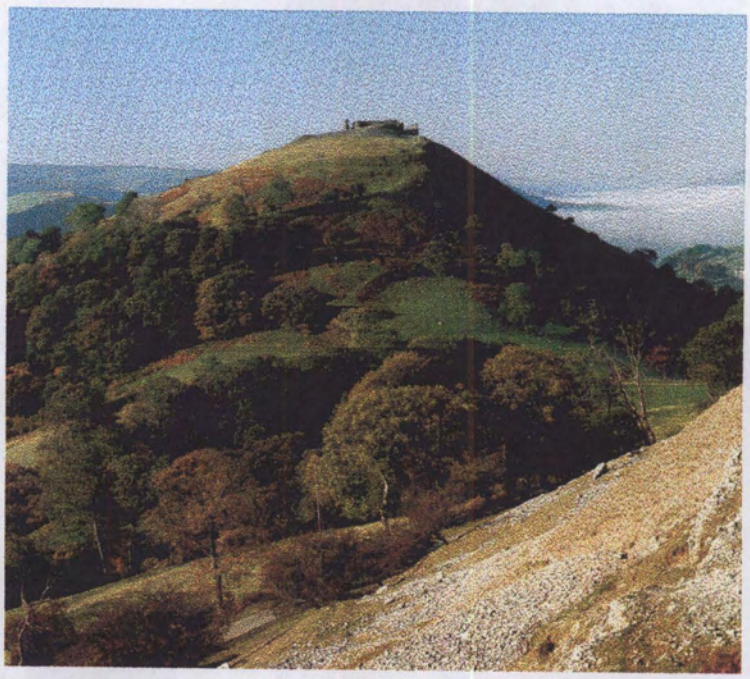

Figure 62. Castell Dinas Brân, Llangollen. As at Beeston, it is sited in ancient defences. Those at Dinas Brân are believed to date from the Iron Age.

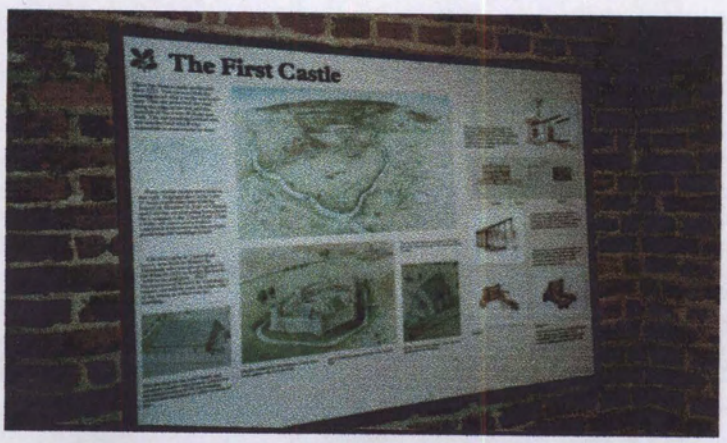

Figure 63. The National Trust's interpretation and presentation at Tattershall Castle, Lincolnshire places the castle in its local context. This display panel recognises similarities in the castle's early design, with that of its neighbour, Bolingbroke Castle.

Figure 64. Lord Tollemache's 1846 Outer Gatehouse at Beeston Castle, housing English Heritage's shop and exhibition.

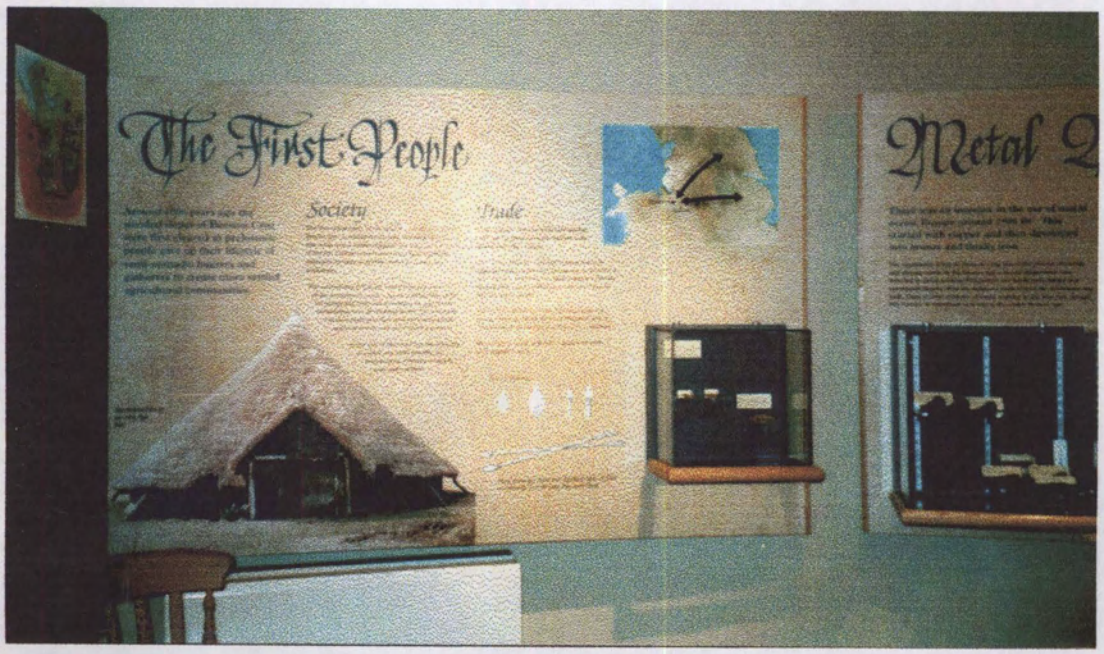

Figure 65. Beeston Castle exhibition (1997): The prehistoric area of the exhibition attempts to place the site in a social context. Finds from this era are displayed in the glass cases inserted into the panels.

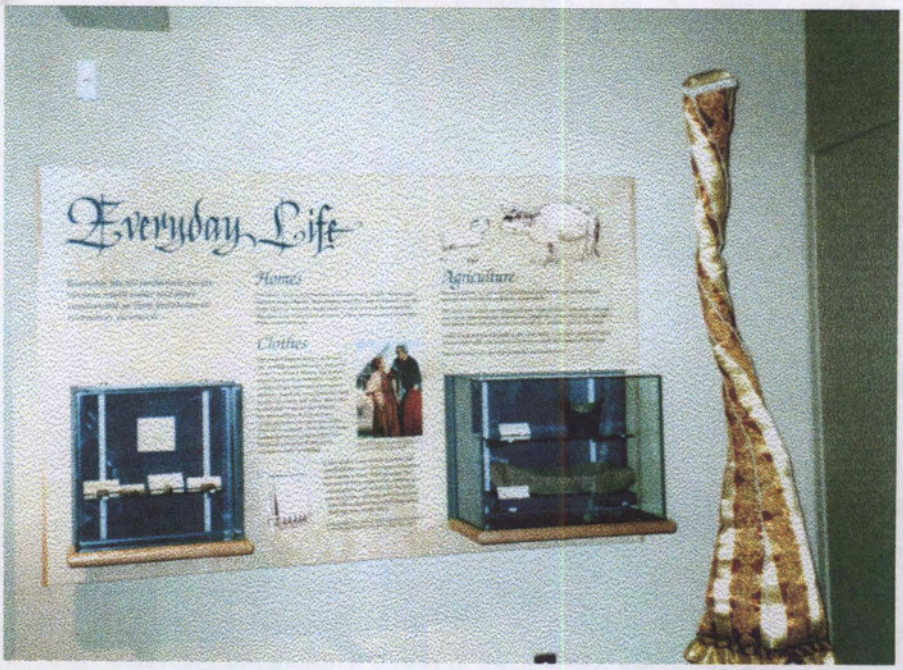

Figure 66. Beeston Castle exhibition (1997): The prehistoric area.

Figure 67. Beeston Castle exhibition (1997): The medieval area of the exhibition, serving as a corridor, connecting the prehistoric and Civil War areas.

Figure 68. Beeston Castle exhibition (1997): The Medieval Life panel is positioned opposite those shown in Figure 66.

Figure 69. Beeston Castle exhibition (1997): The third area is dedicated to the Civil War, the entrance flanked by vertical cloth timelines.

Figure 70. Beeston Castle exhibition (1997): Detail of the Civil War area.

Figure 71. Beeston Castle exhibition (1997): Detail of the Civil War area.

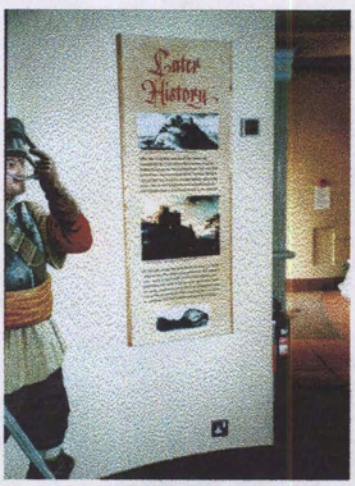

Figure 72. Beeston Castle exhibition (1997): The final panel summarizes events from the mid seventeenth century to 1902.

Figure 73. The pre-1997 Beeston Castle exhibition had a didactic and academic approach, where aesthetics appear to have received low priority by today's standards. Photographs kindly supplied by John Clarke, English Heritage Regional Interpretation Manager.

Figure 74. Beeston Castle English Heritage staff provide the opportunity to handle site finds for those on educational visits.

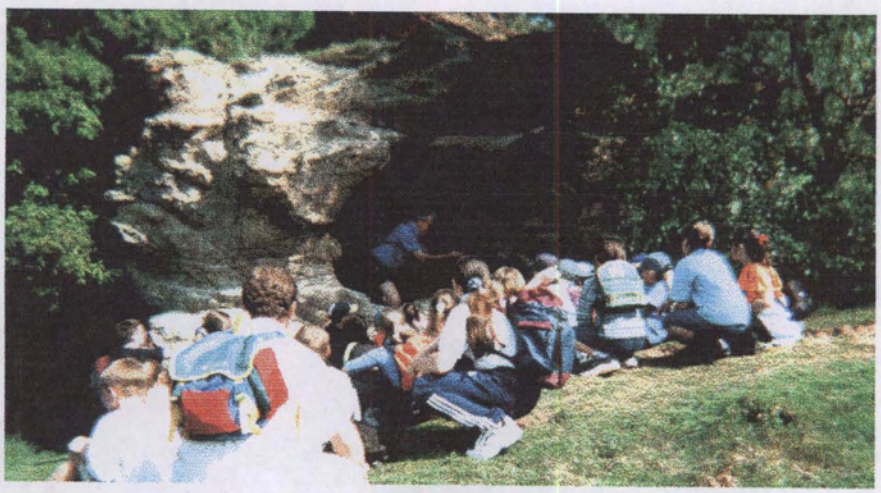

Figure 75. A school group discusses the geology of Beeston site near the area of its (quarried) caves. It is Beeston's natural world that English Heritage will concentrate on with their proposed free site leaflet.

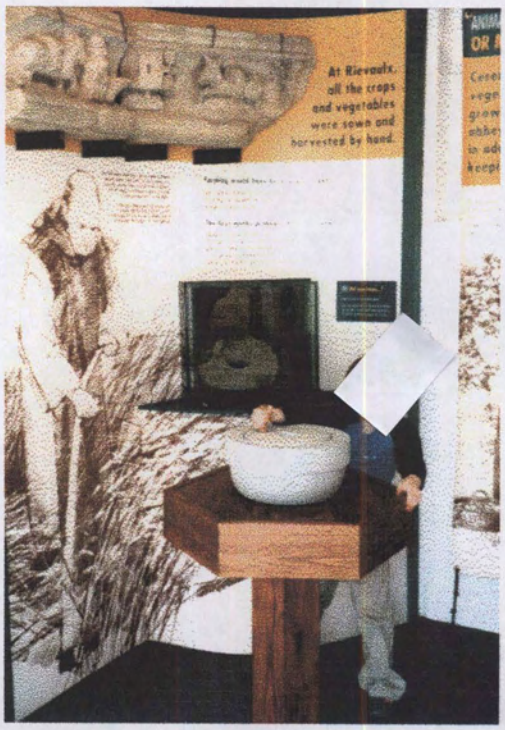

Figure 76. Rievaulx Abbey, Yorkshire exhibition opened in May 2000. The replica of a quern is one of the many hands-on exhibits. Beeston exhibition could perhaps benefit from a similar replica to assist in explaining the use of the prehistoric quern on display (see Figure 66).

Figure 77. A number of the exhibits at Rievaulx Abbey exhibition appear to be tailored to the National Curriculum for schools. Pulleys, for instance, are covered under the subject of science.

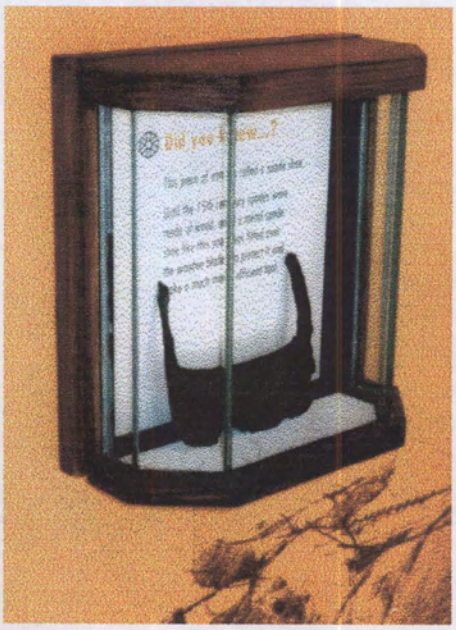

Figure 78. Objects displayed at Rievaulx Abbey exhibition adopt an interrogative rather than didactic approach.

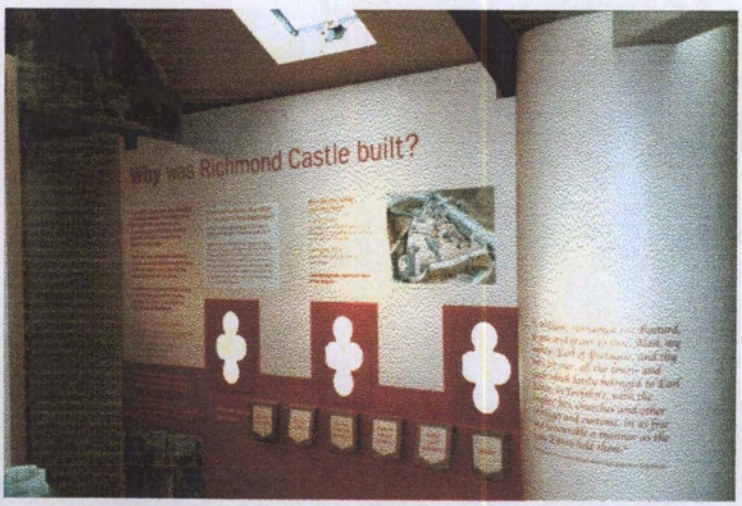

Figure 79. Richmond Castle exhibition opened in July 2000. Flip panels such as those at the bottom of this display, are used to obscure answers to questions and are a simple, inexpensive way to capture the visitor's attention.

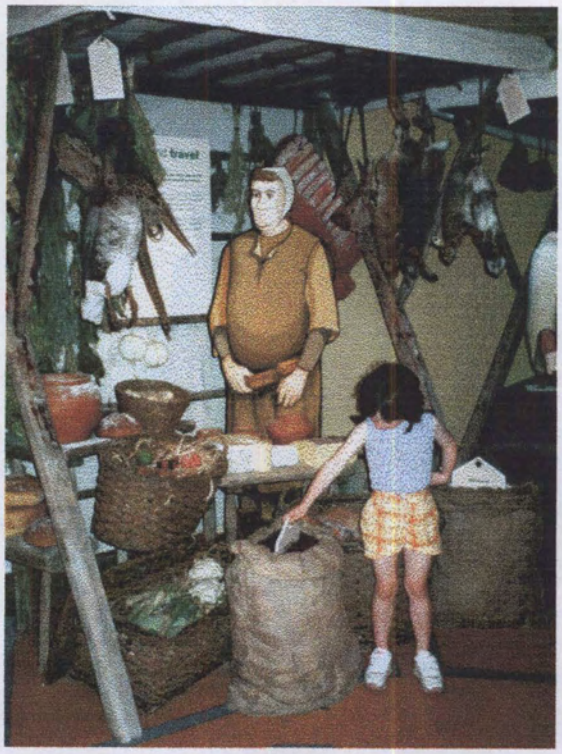

Figure 80. Richmond Castle exhibition: The exhibition uses a variety of media, as indicated above.

Figure 81. Richmond Castle exhibition: The importance of the site's continuity is emphasized by these trays of finds, which includes objects from the twenty-first century.

Figure 82. Richmond Castle exhibition: The computer touch-screens to the left of the model, allow virtual reality access to rooms inhabited by conscientious objectors of the First World War, and which are not accessible to the visitor today.

References

Chapter 5

1. Fowler, 'Heritage: A Post-Modernist Perspective', Uzzell (ed.), *Heritage Interpretation. Vol. I*, p.61.
2. Shanks, Hodder, 'Processual, Postprocessual and Interpretive Archaeologies', Hodder et al, *Interpreting Archaeology,* pp.7-8.
3. Thompson, *Ruins*, p.95.
4. Thompson, *Ruins*, p.35.
5. Assistant to Custodian, Steve Woodman, August 2000.
6. Visit to Bolingbroke Castle, Lincolnshire, July 2000.
7. N. Diment, Editorial: January 1998 issue: 'Not Another Boring Panel', Association for heritage Interpretation (U.K.): http://www.heritageinterpretation.org.uk (accessed, 24 August 2000).
8. The idea was instigated by Steve Woodman, Custodian of Beeston Castle. Meeting, August 2000.
9. Meeting with Andrew Morrison, Senior Regional Curator, English Heritage, July 2000.
10. Meeting with Andrew Morrison, July 2000.
11. Correspondence with Colin Watson, Custodian of Tattershall Castle, Lincolnshire, of 18 July 2000.
12. Chitty, ' The Tradition of Historical Consciousness', Chitty, Baker (eds.), *Managing Historic Sites*, p.93.
13. Thompson, *Ruins*, p.84.
14. Built by the Ministry of Works in 1975, and which has received much controversy since, the bridge allowed the first permanent access to the heart of the castle in 300 years.
15. Robinson, Thomas, *Wales. Castles and Historic Places*, p.60.
16. Chartley Castle, Staffordshire, visited July 2000.
17. Baker, 'Contexts for Collaboration and Conflict' in Chitty, Baker (eds.), *Managing Historic Sites*, p.16.

18. By didactic, is meant a structured and sequential display with labels and panels; a hierarchical arrangement from simple to complex and some claim is made that the story interpreted is true.
19. Beeston Castle Exhibition, 2000.
20. C. Johnstone, 'How Visitors Use Museum Collections', J. Arnold, K. Davies & S. Ditchfield (eds.) *History and Heritage*, (Dorset, 1998), p.70.
21. Meeting with Andrew Morrison, July 2000.
22. Paintings of Beeston Castle: Beeston, gateway to inner ward, by George Barrett (c. 1732-84) and Beeston Castle from the east, 1790's by Julius Caesar Ibbetson.
23. The team normally consists of the Regional Marketing Manager, Curator, Copywriter, Inspector and Interpretation Manager and the appointed design team. Because of Beeston's tight budget, its team did not include the Copywriter or Inspector. Andrew Morrison, Senior Curator, who wrote the words for the presentation, admits that the presentation displays his personality, particularly in the prehistoric area, in which he is particularly interested. Meeting with Andrew Morrison, July 2000.
24. Meeting with Andrew Morrison, July 2000.
25. Meeting with Andrew Morrison, July 2000.
26. Meeting with John Clarke, Interpretation Manager, North, June 2000.
27. E. Kentley & D. Negus, 'Writing Label Copy', Durbin, *Developing* Museums, p.200.
28. Dewey, 1938, quoted in Hein, *Learning in the Museum*, p.2.
29. Cooper, *Bolingbroke Castle. Information for* Teachers and site interpretation panels (site visited July 2000).
30. Ellis (ed.), *Book of Excavations: Beeston Castle, Cheshire.*
31. Correspondence with Colin Watson, Custodian of Tattershall Castle, Lincolnshire, of 18 July 2000.
32. R.C. Thomas, D. Wells in J. Grenvill (ed.), *Managing the Historic Rural Landscape* (An English heritage publication, London, 1999), p.151.
33. Parker Pearson, 'Visitors Welcome', Hunter, Ralston (eds.), *Archaeological Resource Management*, p.229.

34. Meeting with John Clarke, Interpretation Manager, North Region, English Heritage, June 2000, and telephone conversation with Richard Polley, Regional Marketing Manager, English Heritage, August 2000.
35. Meeting with John Clarke, Interpretation Manager, June 2000.
36. E. Hooper-Greenhill, 'The Exhibition Policy', Durbin (ed.), *Developing Museum Exhibitions*, p.110. The use of non-sexist language produced by the Museums and Galleries Commission and the Museums Association.
37. Meeting with John Clarke, Interpretation Manager, June 2000.
38. Meeting with John Clarke, Interpretation Manager, June 2000.
39. Andrew Morrison, while advising that the current exhibition is considerably less verbose than its predecessor, suggests that on hindsight, the current display needs 'chopping down'. July 2000.
40. Aldridge, 'How the Ship ...', Uzzell (ed.), *Heritage Interpretation. Vol. 1.* pp. 66-7).
41. Hoyer-Hansen, 1984, quoted in G.C. Bond, A. Gilliam (eds.), *Social Construction of the Past. Representation as Power*, (London, 1994), p.xiv.
42. These are run by Andrew Morrison. Last held, May 2000.
43. Meeting with Andrew Morrison, July 2000.
44. Assistant to Custodian, Steve Woodman, August 2000. Wheelchair users and accompanying adults access Beeston Castle site free of charge.
45. Beeston Castle Exhibition, 2000.
46. Meeting with Andrew Morrison, July 2000.
47. Ellis (ed.), *Book of Excavations: Beeston Castle, Cheshire.*
48. Ellis (ed.), *Book of Excavations: Beeston Castle, Cheshire* and visit to English Heritage Helmsley Store, July 2000.
49. Meeting with Andrew Morrison, July 2000.
50. Roberts, 'Educators on Exhibit Teams: A New Role, a New Era', in Durbin (ed.), *Developing Museum Exhibitions*, p.14.
51. Parker Pearson, 'Visitors Welcome', Hunter, Ralston (eds.), *Archaeological Resource Management*, p.230.
52. Meeting with Roy Hughes, Education Officer, North West, April 2000.
53. Rumble, 'Interpreting the Built and Historic Environment', Uzzell, *Heritage Interpretation. Vol. I*, p.27.
54. Durbin (ed.), *Developing Museum Exhibitions,* p.6.

55. Meeting with John Clarke, Interpretation Manager, North, June 2000.

56. Assistant to Custodian, Steve Woodman, August 2000, in describing general feedback from visiting teaching staff.

57. P. McManus, 'Getting to Know Your Visitors', Association for Heritage Interpretation (U.K.): http://www.heritageinterpretation.org.uk (accessed, 24 August 2000). Taxonomic displays are giving way to didactic ones, and are more thematic and less object-rich, often with a prescribed route clearly outlined along the floor. They are hands-on exhibitions, where evaluations are focussed not on the learning of concepts but on the emotional or affective response to the demonstration of a concept.

58. Caulton, *Hands-On Exhibitions*, p.135.

59. Viking Living History day held at Beeston, May 2000.

60. Stratton in Hunter, *Preserving the Past*, p.156.

61. Meeting with Andrew Morrison, July 2000 and Assistant to Custodian, Steve Woodman, August 2000.

62. Meeting with Andrew Morrison, July 2000. The allocated budget for the exhibition was officially £150,000.

63. Uzzell (ed.), *Heritage Interpretation. Vol. I*, p.21.

64. Chitty, 'The Tradition of Historical Consciousness', *Managing Historic Sites*, p.87.

CONCLUSION

The past, our heritage, belongs to everyone, and from this belief, the concept of social integration in the way our past is interpreted and presented, arose. Where a ruin's sublime beauty was the vogue for the Victorians, social integration and the sustainable future are key factors today and contribute to the shaping of the depictions of our past. However, in attempting to communicate the past to everyone, various interpretations must be acknowledged both by the presenter and the visitor. A resultant presentation would need to leave the 'unknown quantities' in the display so that the visitor's own imagination may plug the gaps. Acknowledging such grey areas and voids, should go hand-in-hand with a portrayal of the monument's continuity and totality, otherwise the truth and the message about its past may be distorted.

English Heritage attempts to interpret the monuments under its management to a wider audience, but inevitably, with time, money and space constraints, as well as balancing the whims and desires of the visitor with the interpretation of the monument, some of that audience will always slip the presentational net. This balancing pushes, perhaps, for a negotiated reality. We can, however, make an informed choice, so long as we appreciate that that choice, too, is based on the interpretation of others. Indeed, what is history but layers of reworked interpretation? It is said that a picture paints a thousand words, but with interpretation, we must ask 'Whose words?' Interpretation, being unique to individuals, therefore, equally suggests that others cannot be expected to adopt our perspective.

English Heritage interprets each of its managed sites individually, thus drawing on its significance and values rather than smoothing the edges for 'house-style' conformity. With its prime motives being conservation and education, the danger of the portrayal of individuality, however, is that site-specific information learned by the visitor is not easily transportable from one site to another and the learning process is potentially diminished. Instead, the imagination needs to be unlocked and

provoked via a variety of media to stimulate the visitor to learn, but where is the balance, where is the line drawn, between straitjacketing that imagination and enlivening it?

Hands-on and technological displays are now used widely to animate displays, with the intention of appealing to and educating a wider audience. The visitor is motivated, it is believed, by doing and by how he is made to feel. Technology, however, is not the end product itself. It is the message that is important, more so than the medium, for the exhibition exists to complement our appreciation of the monument and not to compete with it.

There could be a case for not putting Beeston Castle in a wider context in the landscape as well as nationally, archaeologically and historically, where it is argued that each site is unique. Alternatively, it is suggested that we need to know about other sites, their contrasts, similarities and continuities, in order to appreciate more fully, the one site in question. Despite its appearances, Beeston Castle is not a separate entity. While acknowledging the individuality, therefore, the castle's totality must be recognised and this includes the landscape, as well as society.

The study of a castle in its landscape is a relative newcomer to castle studies and interpretation has only recently started looking at the broader picture in these terms. It is interpreted, to some extent, in Beeston Castle's archaeological report, yet difficulties arise as to the presentation of that power and effect on the landscape, when it is not necessarily immediately visually apparent to the current visitor. However, that wider impact of Ranulph de Blundeville's power on the landscape opens many doors as to Beeston's significance, and indeed, its existence in its immediate landscape.

The exhibition does not emphasize to the visitor that the castle conveys personal as well as defensive power. Perhaps the conveying of past feudal power is intimidating to today's visitor. However, by recognising that power is intrinsic within society, we either consider it vital to our interpretative process, or portray it as lost,

weakened through time. The latter ignores the inherent power of interpretation and presentation, portrayed by the exhibition itself. It is argued here, however, that to attempt to understand that initial power of the castle, interpreters and presenters need to consider and convey a totality of its history, since meaningful and informed presentations result from an understanding of the monument and its landscape. In turn, a portrayal of totality highlights the group value of associated sites, thus promoting the conservation ethic.

Beeston Castle's disjointed exhibition does not clearly acknowledge English Heritage as part of its continuity. It is argued that if the presentation disregards the present, the link with the future is potentially lost. Arguably, to isolate Beeston Castle in terms of totality and continuity, effectively takes away the castle's meaning and significance as one part of a broader picture, and thus renders it a 'dry shell of the past'. Are we, therefore, left with a sense that Beeston Castle is a relic, rather than a living monument? We must recognise that the castle's power is not just part of the relic, it is part of ourselves, living in our minds and shaped by our individual identities. We may need a guiding hand to understand its presence, but what we each make of Beeston Castle today, is unique and personal.

Appendix 1

Fama, by John Leland

Sublime in air she cast her radiant eyes,

Where far-fam'd Beeston's airy turrets rise:

High on a rock it stood, whence all around

Each fruitful valley, and each rising ground,

In beauteous prospect lay, the scenes to view,

Descending swift, the wondering goddess flew.

Perch'd on the top most pinnacle, she shook

Her sounding plumes, and thus in rapture spoke:

"From Syrian climes the conquering Randolph came,

"Whose well-fought fields bear record of his name,

"To guard his country, and check his foes,

"By Randolph's hands this glorious fabric rose:

"Tho' now in ruin'd heaps thy bulwarks lie,

"Revolving time shall raise those bulwarks high,

"If faith to ancient prophecies be due;

"The *Edward* shall thy pristine state renew".

Taken from T. Pennant, *The Journey from Chester to London* (London, 1782), p.13.

Appendix 2

Beeston Castle and the Civil War

Sir William Brereton was commander of the Parliamentary troops in Cheshire. One of his chief tasks was to maintain the lines of communication with Stockport and Manchester to the North and with the Midlands and London beyond the Midland Gate. A key point was the Royal stronghold of Beeston Castle on its precipitous sandstone rock guarding the Beeston Gap and the main road to North Wales. The first troops to seize the castle on 20 February 1643 were the Parliamentarians, who repaired and garrisoned the castle.

Thomas Steele, cheese dealer turned soldier, held the castle for Parliament, but on 13 December 1643, Captain Thomas Sandford and eight firelocks (infantrymen with muskets), are said to have crawled up the dangerous cliff and entered the (supposedly impregnable) castle at night.

There was a hint of treachery, but whatever the case, Steele, although amply supported by troops, surrendered the castle. Moreover, he entertained Sandford and his men to dinner and beer. When Steele, having led his men out of the castle, arrived at Nantwich, Cheshire, he was tried and convicted of treason and was condemned to be shot. Lord Byron took full advantage of the Royalist gain and wiped out the Roundheads occupying a farm at the foot of the castle.

Beeston remained under Royal control for eleven months until November 1644, when Brereton's Parliamentary troops laid siege to both Beeston and Chester. Although the siege was lifted twice, the Royalists surrendered on 16 November 1645, for, "Theire was neither meate, Ale nor Beere found in the Castle, save onelie a peece of a Turkey pye, Twoe Bisketts, a lyve Peacock and a peahen". Chester surrendered on 3 February 1646.

Sources:

J. Weaver, *Beeston Castle* (English Heritage Souvenir Guide, 1993), pp. 18-21.

J.P. Mann, *Cheshire County Council: On the Civil War Trail In Cheshire* (North West England, 1989), pp. 14-16.

D. Sylvester, *A History of Cheshire* (London & Chichester, 1980, 2nd edition), p. 67.

Appendix 3

Historical Background to Ranulf de Blundeville

Born in about 1170 [1], Ranulf took control from the royal custodians following the death of his father, Hugh II, in 1187. [2] In 1188, he was knighted by Henry II, who gave Ranulf Constance for his wife. Constance was the widow of Geoffrey, Henry's fourth son and thus Ranulf became son-in-law to Henry II and brother-in-law to Richard I. [3] Apart from the royal connections, Constance brought her husband political stature. Ranulf gained his wife's English lands in Brittany, France and the great honour of Richmond and Ranulf 'styled himself duke of Brittany and earl of Richmond'. [4] At about nineteen years old, therefore, Ranulf's 'vast and widely dispersed holdings, hundreds of knight's fees, high lineage, and lofty titles exceeded his years in importance'. [5]

About a decade later, in 1198, Ranulf inherited the southern Lincolnshire honour of Bolingbroke as the closest heir of William III de Roumare, its acquisition substantially enhancing Ranulf's already powerful position in the county. [6] The following year, Richard I died and Ranulf's marriage to Constance ended. Within a year, he had married again. Amongst other land acquired through this marriage, Ranulf gained the Breton barony of Fougères, directly adjacent to Ranulf's Normal lands, the Vale of Mortain in Normandy and Long Bennington in Lincolnshire. [7] When King John lost the duchy in Normandy in 1204, Ranulf also lost his extensive Norman holdings, only to be compensated later by John. He thus became the leading magnate of the realm [8] and a bastion of royal power. [9]

In 1214, Ranulph was granted custody of Bridgenorth Castle and of Shropshire and Staffordshire, in which counties he was to be obeyed as 'earl, as sheriff and as royal official'. Ranulf 'now controlled a range of contiguous counties in the west and northwest of England, an immensely powerful position of support for the king, as well as of prestige and of might for himself.' [10] Ranulf took advantage of the unstable situation leading up to the Magna Carta: In July 1215, he acquired half of the great honour of Leicester and captured Richmond Castle, and in 1216, Middleham Castle. At about the same time as the royal charter, Ranulf issued the 'Cheshire Magna Carta'. [11]

Reference 3, continued

During Henry III's minority, Ranulf was appointed Sheriff of Lancashire, Staffordshire and Shropshire. [12] He was created earl of Lincoln on 23 May 1217 [13], and in that and the following year, Ranulf received grants pertaining to lands and rights of the honour in Lincolnshire, East Anglia and Cambridgeshire. [14] He also acquired the manor of Leeds.[15]

Ranulf formed an alliance with Llwelyn ap Iorwerth ('the Great') of Wales, in 1218, thus 'safeguarding Ranulf's western flank and left him free to play a positive role in British politics' [16], and in June 1218, he left for the Fifth Crusade. [17]

Ranulf arrived back in Chester on 16 August 1220, following Henry III's second coronation on reaching his majority, in May 1220. Henry began the resumption of the royal castles in 1223.

Even in 1230, two years before his death, Ranulf 'appears to have been perpetually desirous of aggrandizing himself by the extension of his dominions'. [18] We find him purchasing lands of Roger de Mersey, which lay between the rivers Ribble and Mersey.

Ranulf died on 25 or 26 October 1232, and was buried on 3 November 1232, his viscera at Wallingford, his heart at Dieulacres Abbey, and his body at St. Werburgh's Abbey, Chester. [19]

References: Appendix 3

1. Thacker (ed.), 'The Earldom of Chester and its Charters, p.14.
2. *Ibid.*, p.14.
3. Husain, *Cheshire Under the Norman Earls*, p.91.
4. Alexander, *Ranulf of Chester*, p.12.
5. *Ibid.*, p.4.
6. *Ibid.*, p.7.
7. *Ibid.*, p.13.
8. *Ibid.*, p.17.
9. *Ibid.*, p.20.
10. Barraclough (ed.), *The Charters of the Anglo-Norman*, p.432.
11. Alexander, *Ranulf of Chester*, pp. 32-3.
12. R. Allen Brown, M. Prestwich and C. Coulson, *Castles: A History Guide* (London, 1980), p.73.
13. *Ibid.*, p.73.
14. Alexander, *Ranulf of Chester*, p.73.
15. Barraclough (ed.), *The Charters of the Anglo-Norman Earls*, p.438.
16. (G. Barraclough quoted in) Hussain, *Cheshire Under the Norman Earls*, p.81.
17. Alexander, *Ranulf of Chester*, p.78.
18. J.H. Hanshall, *History of Cheshire* (Chester, 1823), p.23.
19. Alexander, *Ranulf of Chester,* p.101.

Appendix 4

Castles of Medieval Cheshire and North Wales: A Listing

(Taken from D. Sylvester, *A History of Cheshire* (London & Chichester, 1980, 2nd edn.), p. 46).

Major Castles

Beeston

Chester

Denbigh

Flint

Frodsham

Macclesfield

Rhuddlan

Shotwick

Baronial Castles

Halton, Dunham Massey, Stockport, Shipbrook, Kinderton, Nantwich, Malpas, Holt, Harwarden, Dyserth, Ruthin, Mold, Overton.

Minor Castles

Northwich, Basingwerk, Coleshill, Ewloe, Dodleston, Pulford, Aldford, Shocklach, Oldcastle, Caergwrle, Hope, Prestatyn.

(See Figure 35 for locations).

Appendix 5

Castles held by Ranulf de Blundeville, 6th. Earl of Chester

The following is a list of castles held by Ranulf de Blundeville (taken from J.W. Alexander, *Ranulf of Chester. A Relic of the Conquest* (Athens, 1983), p.114). It omits those besieged and held only briefly, and those for which he was custodian for a short time.

BEESTON, begun in 1225, Cheshire

BOLINGBROKE, from 1198, Lincolnshire

BOWES, Yorkshire

CHARTLEY, held by Beauchamp of Lammarsh, Stafford

CHESTER, Cheshire

CHEYLESMORE, Warwickshire

DEGANWY, Caernarvonshire

DUNHAM MASSEY, held by the Masseys, Cheshire

HAWARDEN, Flint

HOLYWELL, raised by Ranulf, Flint

? HOSELEY, Flint

MOLD, Cheshire

OVERSLEYFORD, held by the Masseys, Cheshire

PULFORD, held by the barons of Pulford, Cheshire

SHOTWICK, Cheshire

Appendix 5, continued

? WREXHAM, Denbighshire.

In addition, Ranulf had custody of the following castles by royal grant:

BRIDGENORTH, Staffordshire

CASTLE PEAK, Derby (1216)

LANCASTER, Lancashire (1216-1223)

MOULTON, Lincolnshire (From 1216)

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME, Stafford (1215-23)

RICHMOND, Yorkshire (1188-99; 1205-18; 1227-29)

SHREWSBURY, Salop (1216-23)

SIMILLY, Normandy, France

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Cheshire and Chester Archives and Local Studies, DTW/2343/A/2.

Tithe Map and Apportionment, respectively, for the Township of Beeston in the Parish of Bunbury in the County of Chester, 1846.

Primary Sources

Beeston Castle, Cheshire, (English Heritage).

Bolingbroke Castle, Lincolnshire, (English Heritage, managed by The Lincolnshire Heritage Trust).

Chartley Castle, Staffordshire, (privately owned).

Dinas Brân Castle, Llangollen, North Wales, (Clwyd County Council).

Dunstanburgh Castle, Northumberland, (Owned by National Trust. Maintained and managed by English Heritage).

Etal Castle, Northumberland, (English Heritage).

Richmond Castle, Yorkshire, (English Heritage).

Stokesay Castle, Shropshire, (English Heritage).

Rievaulx Abbey, Yorkshire, (English Heritage).

Stirling Castle, Stirlingshire, (Historic Scotland).

Tattershall Castle, Lincolnshire, (National Trust).

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G. Barraclough (ed.), *The Charters of the Anglo-Norman Earls of Chester, c. 1071-1237,* (Gloucester, 1988).

Coventry Archives database, Calm2000, *Reference: Persons/18/144/Ranulf de Blundville*, (accessed 28 June, 2000).

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P. Ellis (ed.), *Book of Excavations: Beeston Castle, Cheshire* (English Heritage Archaeological Report no. 23, London, 1993).

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G. Holles, *Lincolnshire Notes, 1634-42,* pp.125-6.

W.D. Klemperer, *Dieulacres Abbey, Leek. Stoke-on-Trent City Museum Archaeology Unit in Liaison with Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd., and History of Art Dept., Warwick University. Survey Commissioned by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. City Museum Archaeology Unit. Report No. 46* (Stoke-on-Trent, 1995).

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